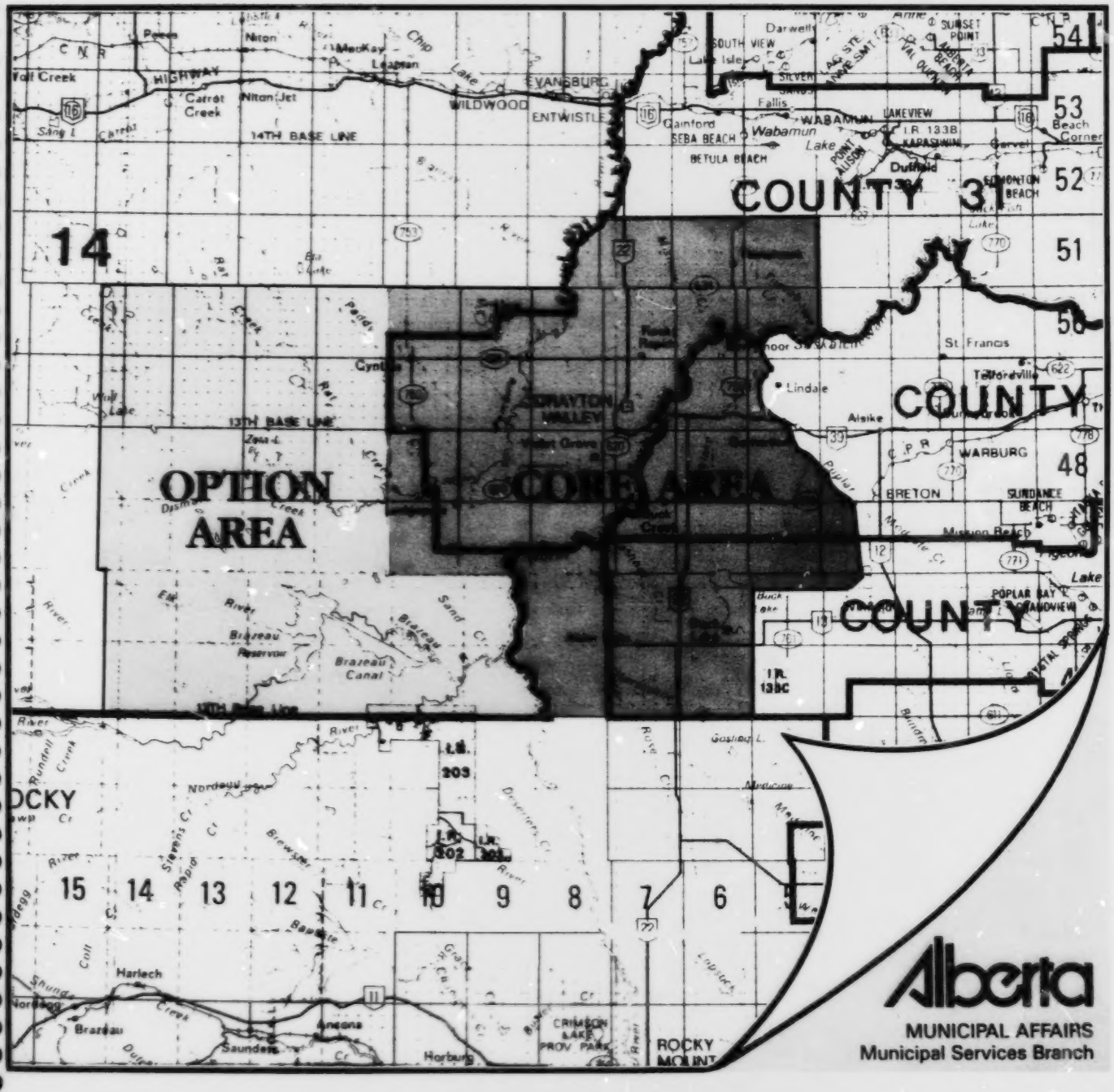
A MUNICIPAL DISTRICT FOR THE DRAYTON VALLEY AREA

INFORMATION REPORT



Alberta

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
Municipal Services Branch

87-05006/

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: Information Report :

Municipal Services Branch
Alberta Municipal Affairs
March 1987

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purposes

The rural portion of the general Drayton Valley area is at present under the municipal jurisdiction of several local authorities. These bodies are headquartered in centres located at a considerable distance from Drayton Valley in quite different geographical circumstances. There has been a long-standing interest on the part of many rural residents of the Drayton Valley area in achieving a local government of their own. At present there is only a sub-office of Parkland County located in Drayton Valley. The Town of Drayton Valley has expressed its support for the rural self-governance initiative. It views positively the prospect of the replacement of the existing four rural jurisdictions, centered remote from the Town, with one rural municipality centered in Drayton Valley or close by.

The feasibility of a separate local government for the Drayton Valley area was addressed in a major study report issued by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in March 1986. The study indicated the financial feasibility of establishing various forms of local government over areas of varying extent. While confirming technical feasibility the study did not address the more political question of whether the formation of a new local government was in fact generally supported to the extent of being warranted. This question has been addressed in various ways in the period following circulation of the main study report and a related summary report.

It is the Minister's determination, from the various study responses received to date, that, at least initially, the formation of a Municipal District is warranted. The area over which this M.D. would have jurisdiction has still to be firmly established in his opinion, but it appears that it could justifiably include a 'Core Area' comprising portions of the existing jurisdictions of Improvement District No. 14, the County of Parkland and the County of Leduc. However, the Minister takes the position that precisely what parts of these existing jurisdictions

would be incorporated into a new M.D. remain to be settled, as does the matter of the possible inclusion of adjacent areas currently within the jurisdiction of the Municipal District of Clearwater and the County of Wetaskiwin. This matter is fully discussed in Chapter 4.

The purposes of this report are as follows:

- to document the public reaction, since the March 1986 release of the main feasibility study, that has informed the still-ongoing assessment of what change is warranted over what area (Chapter 2)

- to condense out those aspects of the first report which deal with an M.D. form of government, for a fairly well-defined core area, from a viability perspective (Chapter 3)

- to present information and observations to assist the affected public and their political representatives in settling upon the precise area to be initially incorporated into the proposed M.D. (Chapter 4)

- to discuss how the existing jurisdictions may be impacted by loss of territory to the proposed M.D. (Chapter 5), and

- to outline the future actions necessary to make the proposed M.D. fully operational by the 1989 municipal elections at the latest (Chapter 6).

1.2 Background

The Ministerial cover letter, which accompanied the main feasibility study report, conveys well the provincial government's position on this issue. As with the main study, this report has been prepared as an information service to area residents. It was the government's position, upon release of the feasibility study, that its future action on the matter would depend on the wishes of the people of the area after informed debate among themselves.

The study report presented information which might, after public review, form the basis for a decision as to whether change should be actively pursued. Much of that public debate and review has now taken place. The results have been digested into the present report, which is designed to further the achievement of a consensus on desired change.

Alberta Municipal Affairs continues to maintain a neutral position on this issue. In considering future action the Minister will naturally wish to be satisfied that any change can be implemented without causing undue hardship or difficulties for local authorities currently servicing the area. By the same token, if existing local government arrangements are not working to the satisfaction of area residents, then the Minister wishes to help correct that situation.

Because of circumstances following the release of the report the department was unable to actively facilitate a high level of informed public debate on the issue. The provincial election campaign in April/May, and subsequent Cabinet changes, dictated that any public information programming on this specific issue be held off. These events were followed quickly by the organization of the main petition which pressed for a plebiscite to settle the matter before the municipal elections in the Fall.

The Department's resources were diverted into the considerable effort required in mounting the plebiscite in September. Some pre-plebiscite information meetings, held in the area, were staffed, but these were sponsored by others. The plebiscite prompted the first real public engagement of the issue, and generated considerable reaction on many fronts. The matter also became an issue in the Fall municipal elections.

The combined reaction was one of general support for, or acknowledgment of, the case for the rural Drayton Valley area to be accorded a municipal government of its own. However, there was considerable lack of consensus on what peripheral areas, outside an accepted 'core Parkland area', should be included or excluded in the final boundary determination.

1.3 Context

This report may be best represented as the main vehicle for a public information and public consultation program mounted by the Department. It is intended in part to assist in the achievement of a greater consensus on the boundary issue. It is also intended to form the basis for discussions with existing jurisdictions, with the expectation that the responses will be fed into the public programming.

CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC REACTION TO THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

2.1 Introduction

The main report on the feasibility study was released in March 1986. Approximately 500 full copies were circulated at this time, and a further 500 summary copies were circulated in the month or so leading up to the September 15, 1986 plebiscite. Apart from the plebiscite, petitions were received before and after this major event, and these are reported in this chapter. Other reactions, from various public bodies, industrial interests or individuals, are also reported in a summary fashion.

2.2 Pre-Plebiscite Petitions

2.2.1 Improvement District No. 14 Petition:

The petition originated out of a series of I.D. 14 ratepayers meetings held in April and May 1986. The Drayton Valley Area Municipal Feasibility Study was a major topic of discussion at these meetings, especially those held in Evansburg, Niton and Peers. There was a spontaneous mass desire to do something to communicate the strong opposition of those present to any encroachment of the proposed municipality into I.D. 14. The I.D. Advisory Council was pressed to facilitate a petition to the provincial government.

The wording of the petition was as follows:

> "We the undersigned hereby petition the Government of the Province of Alberta to not alter or adjust the boundaries of Improvement District No. 14 to accommodate the establishment of a new rural municipality centered in Drayton Valley."

Those soliciting signatures had information sheets on projected assessment losses to the I.D., and on projected tax increases to ratepayers, and a map of the areas referenced in the feasibility study.

The petition has been represented by I.D. officials as a preliminary indication of popular feeling on the issue. There was no attempt to systematically canvass the whole I.D., nor all residents of the urban municipalities within the I.D. Also, there was no effort to obtain a particular number of signatures, although it was not restricted to I.D. ratepayers. The 2,319 signatories to the petition represent 9.1% of the aggregate population of the I.D. and the urban municipalities it surrounds.

The petition, conducted in May and June, was not specifically limited by age, residence, or proprietary elector status, although each signature was properly witnessed. Petition coverage was highly uneven across the area. The former I.D. 14 (East), and the urban areas of Evansburg and Wildwood are much better represented than the former I.D. 14 (West) and the urban areas of Hinton and Edson. While the petition signatories amount to around 10% to 15% of resident electors in the area as a whole it is estimated that at least 50% of the resident electors in the eastern areas signed the petition. In some areas a much higher percentage coverage appeared probable. The main conclusion to be drawn is that there is no desire whatsoever, on the part of Chip Lake area residents of I.D. 14, in actually being incorporated into a new Drayton Valley area municipality.

2.2.2 Drayton Valley Area YES Group Petition:

The Yes Group of Western Ratepayers launched a major petition in June 1986 requesting a system of plebiscites that would lead to the formation of a Municipal District.

The first plebiscite sought consisted of an amalgam of parts of the County of Parkland and I.D. 14. The area in question corresponded to

virtually all that part of the Drayton Valley provincial electoral division lying to the north and west of the North Saskatchewan River (The only omissions were Townships 48 - 50/Range 15 in the extreme north-west, and Township 52/Ranges 5 - 7 in the Moon Lake area).

The petition sought a second plebiscite area in the extreme west end of the County of Leduc, lying west of Buck Lake Creek. A third plebiscite was identified, also in Leduc County, in the area east of Buck Lake Creek to the eastern boundary of the Breton School attendance area.

A fourth plebiscite was identified with respect to the Alder Flats high school attendance area in the extreme west end of Wetaskiwin County. Finally, a fifth plebiscite was sought by the petition respecting another part of Westaskiwin County lying east of the Buck Mountain Community Pasture to the east side of the Breton school attendance area continued in township 47.

The petition was restricted to proprietary electors. It did not directly seek to establish support for formation of a new M.D., only for a government-sponsored system of plebiscites to decide the question yes or no. Although it is likely that most of those signing the petition wanted the plebiscites to record their positive support for a new M.D. it is also likely that a few may have signed the petition simply to ensure their opportunity to register a negative vote within a particular plebiscite area.

The YES Group set out to obtain the signatures of around 50 percent of the proprietary electorate within a short three-week time-frame in late June/early July. In the final analysis a total of 2,057 persons (about 43% of the estimated numbers of eligible voters) signed the petition for the system of plebiscites. The petition was conducted largely on the basis of the provincial electoral division polling areas, for which fairly reliable estimates of the numbers of eligible voters were available. The distribution of signatories by these polling areas is indicated in Table 2-1.

The distribution of petitioners by the proposed plebiscite areas was as follows:

	Signatories #	Eligible Voters #	Sign - Percentage %
1. Parkland County/I.D. 14	1,071	2,383	44.9
2. Leduc West	273	565	48.3
3. Leduc East	415	792	52.4
4. Wetaskiwin West	265	809	32.8
5. Wetaskiwin East	29	272	10.7
OVERALL	2,057	4,821	42.6

The petition was most successful in the Cynthia-Easyford and Moose Hill-Breton areas. Sign-rates above 50% were also registered in a broad central belt stretching from Violet Grove through Buck Creek to Carnwood and Alsike. Relatively weak responses were registered in the Rocky Rapids-Tomahawk-Berrymoor-Lindale area in the north and the Lodgepole-Alder Flats-Buck Lake-Winfield areas in the south.

2.3 Plebiscite

As a result of the petition submitted by the Yes Group of Western Ratepayers the Minister of Municipal Affairs directed that a plebiscite be held to determine the support for the formation of a new Municipal District in the Drayton Valley area. The Local Authorities Election Act was used as the basis for running the plebiscite, and the date was set as September 15 to ensure completion prior to the general municipal elections in October.

The plebiscite was organized on the basis of six voting sub-divisions with a total of sixteen voting stations spread throughout the area (See Map 2-1). Eligible voters were permitted to vote at any of the stations

TABLE 2-1

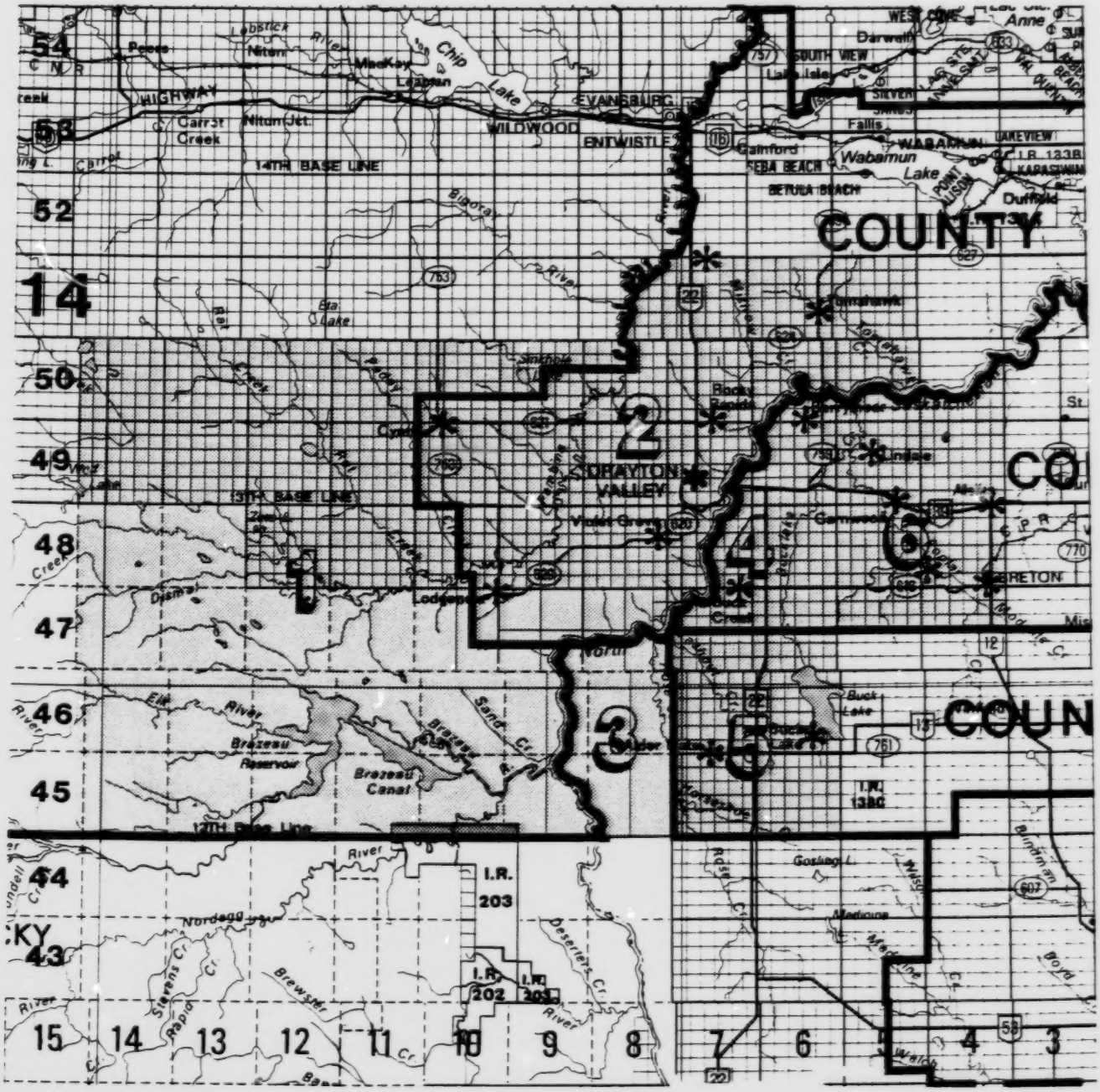
DRAYTON VALLEY AREA YES GROUP PETITION:

Distribution of Petitioners by Electoral Polling Areas

Polling Area		Petitioners	Eligible Voters	Petitioning
No.	Name	No.	No.	%
1.	Lodgepole	56	169	33.0
2.	Violet Grove	205	354	58.0
3.	Alder Flats	132	434	30.4
4.	Buck Creek	210	353	59.5
5.	Buck Lake	93	259	35.9
6.	Pendryl	8	172 (est.)	4.7
7/8	Winfield (North)	21	100 (est.)	21.0
9.	Breton Country	228	432	52.7
41.	Alsike	71	142 (est.)	50.0
42.	Carnwood	96	186	51.6
43.	Lindale	44	127	34.6
44.	Berrymoor	79	233	33.9
45.	Whitby	46	120	38.3
46.	Tomahawk	120	384	31.2
48.	Moon Lake	32	145 (est.)	22.1
49.	Rocky Rapids	202	480	42.1
50.	Drayton Valley Country	91	178	51.1
61/62	Poplar Ridge	201	372	54.0
63.	Easyford	86	131	65.6
64.	Cynthia	32	50	64.0
	Others	4	-	-
	TOTAL	2057	4821	42.6%

MAP 2-1

Drayton Valley Area Plebiscite : Voting Subdivision Areas (6), and Voting Station Locations (16) *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Lobstick
Niton
MacKay
Chip Lake
Lesman
HIGHWAY
Garrat Creek
Niton Jct.
14TH BASE LINE
EVANSBURG
WILDWOOD
ENTWISTLE
Gainford
SEBA BEACH
BETULA BEACH
Wabamun Lake
WABAMUN
LAKEVIEW
I.R. 133B
KAPASIWIN
Duffield
COUNTY
Bigoray River
Big Lake
Smiths Lake
Cygnet Creek
DRAYTON VALLEY
Violet Grove
Lodgepole
13TH BASE LINE
Dismal Creek
Elk River
Brazeau Reservoir
Brazeau River
Sand Cr.
Brazeau Canal
12TH Base Line
Nordegg River
I.R. 203
I.R. 202
I.R. 205
Stevens Cr.
Rapid Cr.
Brewster Cr.
Deserters Cr.
Buck Lake
I.R. 138C
Gosling L.
Medicine
Wildhay River
Burnstick
Wabamun
Darwell
SOUTH VIEW
Lake Isle
SILVER SAND BEACH
Anne
Fallis
Carrowood
Indian
Crimson Lake
Lodge Creek
Rosa Cr.
Waiau
Misty Lake
Ricinus Creek
Dismal Creek
Worth
Creek
Cygnet
Lake
Beaver
Lake
Lodge
Creek
Violet Grove
Carrowood
Indian
Crimson Lake
Buck Lake

located throughout the plebiscite area. The location of the voters' residence determined the colour of ballot which was issued, each of the six colours used being representative of a voting sub-division.

To be eligible to vote persons had to be a Canadian citizen, aged 18 or over, have resided in Alberta for the previous six months, and be a resident of their voting subdivision on voting day. Because of the squaring-off process used in defining the boundaries of the voting subdivision areas some individuals to the south and east of Breton who had signed the earlier petition and were within the Breton school attendance area, were excluded from voting in the plebiscite. It later became apparent through subsequent petitions that the persons to the east of Breton (east of Range 3) had mainly petitioned in order to have the opportunity to vote 'no' in the plebiscite, while the persons to the south, in the North Norbuck area of Wetaskiwin County, had mainly petitioned in order to have the opportunity to vote 'yes'.

TABLE 2-2
PLEBISCITE RESULTS BY VOTING STATION AND BY VOTING AREA

	I.D. #14		COUNTY OF PARKLAND		M.D. OF CLEARWATER		LEDUC WEST		WETASKIWIN		LEDUC EAST		TOTAL VOTES CAST
Voting Area (see Map 2-1)	1		2		3		4		5		6		
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	
Alder Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	114	101	0	0	217
Alsike	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	19	108	129
Berrymoor	0	0	0	1	0	0	77	23	0	0	2	0	103
Breton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	47	108	158
Buck Creek	0	0	1	0	0	0	115	30	4	2	10	7	169
Buck Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	56	83	0	0	140
Carnwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	50	50	102
Cynthia	0	0	20	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	25
D.V. Rural	0	0	192	19	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	2	221
Lindale	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	16	0	0	33	40	98
Lodgepole	0	0	41	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	50
Moon Lake	0	0	26	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52
Moose Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	82	18	102
Rocky Rapids	0	0	174	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	214
Tomahawk	0	0	56	143	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	199
Violet Grove	1	0	114	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	132
Advance	0	0	17	1	0	0	5	0	1	2	6	5	37
TOTALS	1	0	641	258	0	0	222	74	175	189	249	339	2148
BY SUB-	100%		71%	29%			75%	25%	48%	52%	42%	58%	
DIVISIONS	1		899		0		296		364		588		

GRAND TOTALS: Yes Votes 1,288 (59.96%); No Votes 860 (40.4%)

The question voted upon was as follows:

> "If a new Municipal District is formed in the Drayton Valley area, would you wish to be included in it?"

The detailed results of the plebiscite by voting station are presented in Table 2-2. The results by voting subdivision area were as follows:

TABLE 2-3

PLEBISCITE RESULTS BY VOTING SUBDIVISION

		Estimated Eligible Electors	Total Votes Cast	Percentage Turnout	YES Votes	(% of Total Cast)	NO Votes	(% of Total Cast)
1.	I.D. 14	5	1	20%	1	(100)	0	(0)
2.	Parkland	2727	899	33%	641	(71.3)	258	(28.7)
3.	Clearwater	0	0	0%	0	(0)	0	(0)
4.	Leduc West	434	296	68%	222	(75.0)	74	(25.0)
5.	Wetaskiwin	728	364	50%	175	(48.1)	189	(51.9)
6.	Leduc East	872	588	67%	249	(42.3)	339	(57.7)
	Totals	4766	2148	45%	1288	(60.0)	860	(40.0)

The eligible electorate was estimated on the basis of polling area enumeration list data used in the 1983 provincial election. The turnout in that election was 49.9%. This compares with an estimated turnout of about 45% for the plebiscite. The highest turnouts, at around two-thirds, were in the two Leduc County voting subdivisions. The Leduc County Council and School Board mounted a major campaign in its defense, involving several public meetings in the area, just prior to the plebiscite. The lowest turnout, at around one-third, was registered in the Parkland County area. There was limited pre-plebiscite meeting activity in this area, partly because the Parkland County chose to adopt a neutral stand on the issue.

An above average turnout was registered in the Wetaskiwin voting subdivision despite indications at a pre-plebiscite meeting that there could be a boycott of the vote. There was a concern that the M.D. issue should be decided only after a regional high school issue had been settled, and that the voters in the area should be given the opportunity to register a choice between the status quo, the proposed M.D., and the M.D. of Clearwater.

The plebiscite results for the I.D. 14 and M.D. of Clearwater areas are virtually meaningless since there is little or no permanent population in these areas. They may be best regarded however as natural extensions of the Parkland and Wetaskiwin voting areas.

The voting pattern by voting station is indicated, in general rather than precise terms, by the data presented in Table 2-4. Because of the colour-coded ballot system, and the resultant opportunity for voters to vote wherever it was convenient for them, it was not possible to precisely define the voting station areas, and hence the applicable station vote totals. The total votes cast at each station sometimes included some votes assigned to other voting subdivisions in the final count. Also, the station count could have included some votes that might have been more accurately attributed to other voting stations within the same voting subdivision. Nevertheless, for each station there was a predominant set of yes/no votes which has been used here to establish a more detailed voting pattern than is possible by simply referencing the six voting subdivisions.

Within Parkland County the YES vote percentage was over 80% in most cases, and over 90% in the case of the area fringing the Town of Drayton Valley. However, the YES vote percentage was only 50% in the Moon Lake area, and, more notably, there was a strong negative vote in the Tomahawk area.

Both stations in the Leduc West voting subdivision registered YES vote percentages of close to 80%. In Leduc East the only clear YES vote

percentage was Moose Hill at 82%. Otherwise, the vote was either roughly equally split, as at Lindale and Carnwood, or was strongly negative, as for the country area around Breton and, especially, at Alsike. The extreme polarization in the vote in Leduc East is very evident by a comparison of the Alsike and Moose Hill results. As striking is the polarization between the Breton and Moose Hill results, stations only a few miles apart. Overall, the pattern of results in the Leduc areas indicates a major split in opinion on either side of Modeste (or Poplar) Creek, those on the south and west being strongly in favour of being included in the proposed M.D. and those in the north and east appearing to be strongly opposed.

The division between the two Leduc County voting subdivisions was along Buck Lake Creek, to the west of Modeste Creek. If the Leduc County votes are considered in aggregate the results indicate a YES majority (53.3%) on a 67.7% turnout. It should be recalled that some persons to the south and east of Breton, within the school attendance area, were denied the opportunity to vote in the plebiscite. Based on a letter-petition submitted by this interest group it is estimated that there might have been around 30 to 40 additional NO votes. This would not have been sufficient to overturn the aggregate YES majority, but it would have made it an even barer one.

In the Wetaskiwin voting subdivision the overall vote was roughly equally split, but the Alder Flats station registered a majority YES vote while the Buck Lake station registered a firmer NO vote.

In summary, the overall Parkland plebiscite clearly indicated strong majority support for inclusion in the proposed M.D., although the Tomahawk area strongly disapproved and the Moon Lake area produced no clear indication either way. The Leduc plebiscites in aggregate produced no clear indication either way, but at the polling station level the Berrymoor, Buck Creek and Moose Hill areas showed a substantial majority vote in favour of being included while the Alsike and Breton (Country) polling stations showed a substantial majority vote against being included. The Lindale and Carnwood areas showed no clear indication

either way. The Wetaskiwin plebiscite overall also showed no clear indication either way but the Alder Flats area marginally favoured inclusion while the Buck Lake area more firmly rejected inclusion.

TABLE 2-4

PLEBISCITE VOTING PATTERNS BY VOTING STATION

	Percentage of Total Votes Cast	
	YES	NO
1. Parkland Voting Area: Overall	71.3	28.7
Cynthia	87	13
D.V. Country/Fringe	91	9
Lodgepole	84	16
Moon Lake	50	50
Rocky Rapids	81	19
Tomahawk	28	72
Violet Grove	87	13
2. Leduc West Voting Area: Overall	75.0	25.0
Berrymoor	77	23
Buck Creek	79	21
3. Leduc East Voting Area: Overall	42.3	57.7
Alsike	15	85
Breton Country	30	70
Carnwood	50	50
Lindale	45	55
Moose Hill	82	18
4. Wetaskiwin Voting Area: Overall	48.1	51.9
Alder Flats	53	47
Buck Lake	40	60

2.4 Post-Plebiscite Petitions

A reference map for these area activities is presented as Map 2-2.

2.4.1 Tomahawk Area, Parkland County:

The Tomahawk area registered a strong negative vote in the September plebiscite, contrasting with the strong affirmative vote in the other parts of Parkland County involved in the plebiscite. A meeting had been held in Tomahawk just prior to the plebiscite: it revealed a lack of information among area residents on the issue, partly because people from the area were not actively involved in the YES Group.

Following the plebiscite a group of Tomahawk area residents organized a petition which was directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The wording was as follows:

> "We, the undersigned, wish to remain in the County of Parkland, No. 31 of Stony Plain should the new M.D. of Drayton Valley be formed. Therefore, the boundary line would have to be changed to exclude Ranges 5 and 6, Township 51."

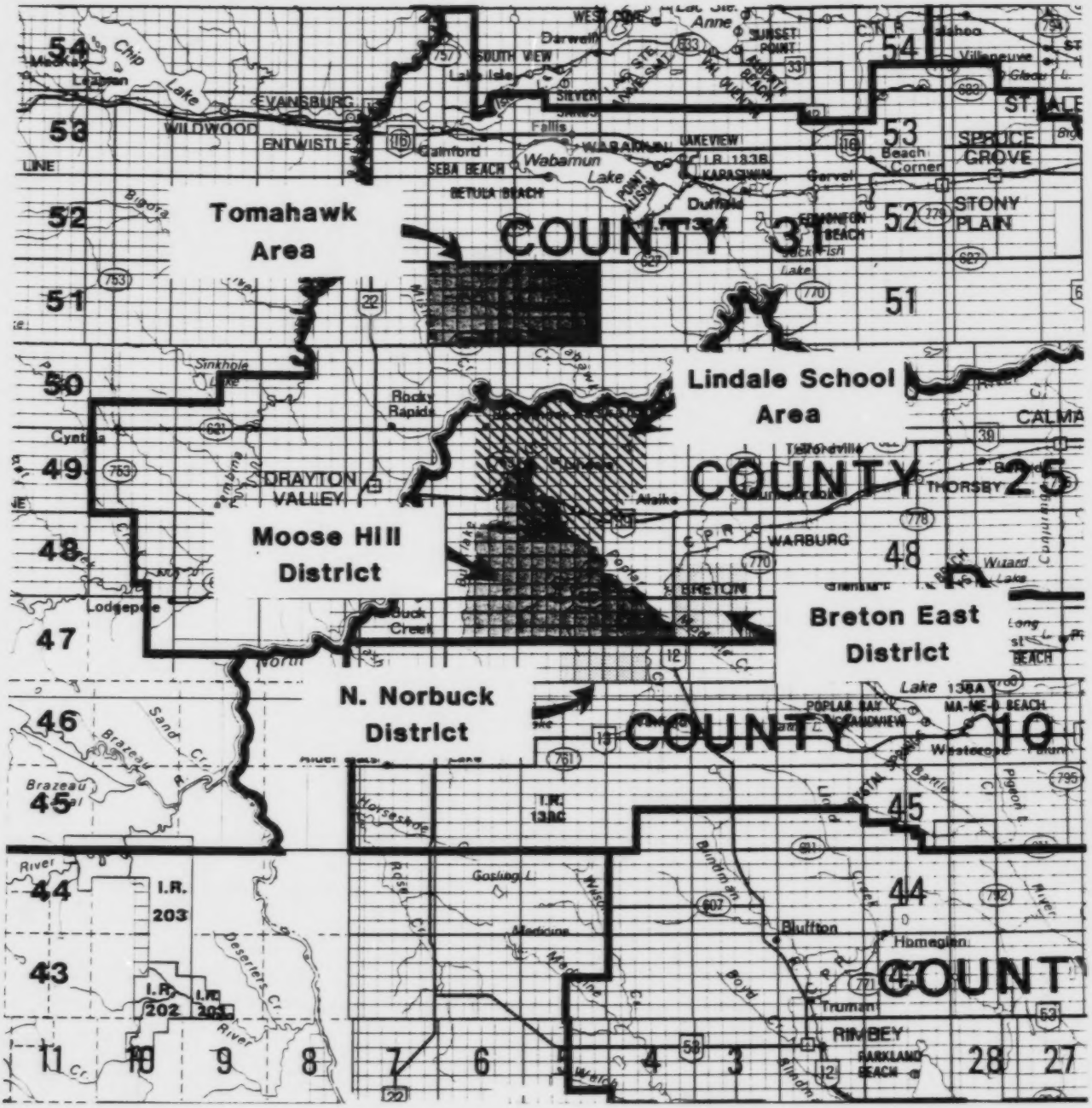
The petition contains 116 signatures. They were not formally witnessed, nor did the printed name appear beside each signature. However, the petition details the land description of each signatory, and the heading indicated it was directed to 'residents and property-owners in Ranges 5 and 6, Township 51, 18 years of age and older.'

2.4.2 Moose Hill District, Leduc County:

The voting station level plebiscite results revealed a major split in the Leduc East voting subdivision. Strong NO voting in the Alsike area and in the rural environs of the Village of Breton, dictated a NO majority, despite a strong YES vote in the Moose Hill area (and no clear indications in the Lindale and Carnwood areas).

MAP 2-2

Post-Plebiscite Petitions : Reference Map



The Breton Area Branch of the YES Group, consisting mainly of Moose Hill area residents, mounted a petition to establish the point that those persons to the south and west of Modeste Creek were almost solidly in favour of being included in the new M.D. By implication, the NO vote was strongly concentrated in the area of Leduc East to the north and east of Modeste Creek.

The petition appears to have been well-executed, all witnesses having sworn before a Commissioner of Oaths, the petition question being clearly stated and printed on all forms, and reference made to an attached map defining the subject area. Each form listed the legal land description, the printed name, the postal address, the petitioner's signature, and the witness' signature.

The petition involved a complete canvass of the area. As a result, the petition was accompanied by a log of: those area residents abstaining from the process (Jehovah's Witness or new resident); those normally resident in the area but absent during the five days of the petitioning effort; and those persons refusing to sign the petition, along with an indication of the reasons for their refusal. In the course of the petition it was noted that there were several residences indicated on the county maps which either did not exist on the ground, were obviously vacant, or were occupied only seasonally (summer cottages). These details suggest that there was indeed a thorough effort to cover everyone in the area.
The wording of the petition was as follows:

> "The undersigned persons, being eligible electors of the area located within the County of LEDUC and east of the BUCK LAKE CREEK and west of the MODESTE CREEK hereby petition the Minister that the above discussed area be included in the proposed MUNICIPAL DISTRICT centered in the Drayton Valley area."

The results of the petition were as follows:

Eligible Electors	Number	% of Total Eligibles
Signatories	218	85%
Decliners	26	10%
Abstainers	9	3%
Absent at time	4	2%
Total Eligibles	257	100%

Those declining to sign the petition and stating their reasons mostly indicated satisfaction with the status quo, while several indicated they were county employees. Other justifications included a belief that the start-up costs for the new M.D. would be too high; absence of guarantees (especially job guarantees); loss of recreation grants; 'taxes will rise'; 'not enough information'; 'unconcerned'; 'afraid of the unknown'; and that it would be 'madness' to support inclusion in the new M.D.

If the abstainers and absents are ignored the petition indicates that 89.3% of area residents support inclusion in the new M.D. The 218 persons signing the petition compare with the total of 249 YES votes registered in the Leduc East plebiscite. The full Leduc East plebiscite results indicate that there were 82 YES votes registered at Moose Hill, 33 at Lindale, 50 at Carnwood, 10 at Buck Creek, 47 at Breton, 19 at Alsike, 2 at Berrymoor, and 6 advance. The petition results, in combination with the distribution of YES votes in the plebiscite, strongly indicates that the south-west part of the Leduc East area is characterized by overwhelming support for inclusion in the proposed M.D.

2.4.3. North Norbuck District, Wetaskiwin County:

The North Norbuck district of Wetaskiwin County has strong associations with the general Breton area, and in particular with the

Moose Hill district of Leduc County. A group of Norbuck area residents joined in the main Breton Area YES Group petition, to register their desire to also be included in the new M.D. The wording of their petition was as follows:

> "The undersigned persons, being eligible electors of the area located east of the BUCK MOUNTAIN grazing reserve within the County of Wetaskiwin and within Township 47 and west of the MODESTE CREEK, hereby petition the Minister that the above described area be included in the proposed M.D. centered in the Drayton Valley area."

The results of the Norbuck area petition were as follows:

Eligible Electors	Number	% of Total Eligibles
Signatories	22	92%
Decliners	2	8%
Abstainers	-	-
Absent at time	-	-
Total Eligibles	24	100%

The couple declining to sign stated no interest. Three residences were identified on the county map which either did not exist or was clearly unoccupied. All of the petitioners indicated a postal address at Breton.

2.4.4. Breton East District, Leduc County:

A group of residents living east of Breton in Range 3, and within the Breton school attendance area, were excluded from the plebiscite when boundaries were squared off. This group had made a point of signing the initial petition, requesting a system of plebiscites, in order that they would have the opportunity to register their opposition to

being included, and to do so in a plebiscite area (Leduc East) where they felt a NO majority was possible.

Following the plebiscite results, which produced a 57% NO majority, the YES minority in the Moose Hill area pointed out that had the Leduc plebiscite area not been split in two, there would have been a slight YES majority overall. This prompted the group of Breton east residents to organize a letter-petition to record their opposition, in an effort to restore an overall NO majority.

The group's communication to the Minister was not a formal petition, but it contained about 40 signatures. This would not have been enough to restore an overall NO majority in the combined Leduc voting subdivisions. However, it would have made the YES majority an even barer one, underlining the lack of a clear indication of the position of Leduc County plebiscite area residents in aggregate.

The solid opposition in the area east of Breton is consistent with the view that Modeste Creek (continued as Buck Lake Creek in the north) constitutes the appropriate boundary for the proposed M.D. The Breton East letter-petitioners acknowledge that while they would prefer no change in the present boundaries of Leduc County, they understand the special concerns of their neighbours in the Buck Creek area:

> "Not only are they very close to Drayton Valley, but their children, for the most part, attend Drayton Valley schools. Therefore, with a certain sadness associated with losing a long-time colleague, we support their aspirations in becoming part of a new government unit and wish them well."

However, the Breton East group firmly opposes any other area within the present county being included in the new M.D. This places them in direct opposition to the position of the 'Breton West' group, between Buck Lake and Modeste Creeks.

2.4.5. Lindale School Attendance Area, Leduc County:

A petition was undertaken in late 1986 in the Lindale school attendance area of Leduc County. It was communicated to the Minister via the Leduc County Board of Education. The wording of the petition was as follows:

> "We the undersigned residents of the Lindale School Attendance Area hereby petition the Alberta Minister of Municipal Affairs, that the Lindale school remain operational under its present municipal jurisdiction, because the only way to guarantee the continued existence of the Lindale school is to guarantee the present enrollment and levels of instruction by maintaining the Lindale School Attendance Area."

The petition was signed by 180 persons, which county officials have said represents 90 percent of the people in the Lindale school attendance area. The attendance area extends across Buck Lake Creek into the Berrymoor area, which voted strongly in favour of inclusion in the new M.D. in the course of the plebiscite. It also includes part of the area between Buck Lake and Modeste (or Poplar) Creeks where petitioners have almost solidly supported inclusion in the new M.D. Otherwise, most of the school attendance area lies to the north or west of Buck Lake and Modeste Creeks, in an area which appears to have registered a strong negative vote in the plebiscite (based on the analysis of the Moose Hill District petition, Section 2.4.2).

The County Board of Education's main objective is to prevent any part of either the Lindale or Breton school attendance areas being incorporated into the new M.D. This strategy is based on an expectation that once formed, the new M.D. will apply for county status, or will be encouraging a contiguous new school division. If either of these scenarios materialize the Leduc County school system would be diminished. It has already had to contend with the trauma of the secession of the City of Leduc from the county school system, and does not welcome the prospect of further reductions in jurisdiction.

2.5 Other Reactions

2.5.1 Improvement District No. 14:

I.D. 14 interests, led mainly by the I.D. Advisory Council, have reacted with opposition to the possibility of losing territory to the proposed M.D. This has taken the form of organizing the major petition detailed above (Section 2.2.1); joint meetings with area urban municipalities and the Yellowhead School Division; lobbying M.L.A.s; corresponding with provincial government Ministers; and a letter-writing campaign directed at major industrial taxpayers in the I.D. An I.D. 14 Ratepayers Committee has presented a brief to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and a few individuals have written directly to the Minister or the Premier.

The Chairman of the I.D. Advisory Council wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in July 1986, re-iterating the Council's concern with possible I.D. 14 boundary adjustments to accommodate the proposed M.D. 'Very serious' tax increase implications for I.D. taxpayers were foreseen if any of the boundary changes suggested in the feasibility study were made. The Chairman concluded by recommending that:

> "... since the Drayton Valley area has enough assessment to form its own local government (higher than the rural municipal average), that the I.D. 14 boundaries not be changed."

The I.D. position has been generally backed by Edson area interests. The Town of Edson wrote to the Minister asking that the Town be recognized as an affected party and have a say in the final decision on the issue. It also questioned the wisdom of further burdening the industry in the Town's hinterland through increased taxation. The basic position:

> "We are not opposed to the development of a new separate local government in the Drayton Valley area, provided that it does not encompass any portion of I.D. No. 14."

The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Premier relaying basically the same concerns as were stated by the Town of Edson.

The Yellowhead School Division, which is roughly contiguous with I.D. 14, has written to the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Education, registering 'considerable alarm' at the possibility of the proposed M.D. encroaching on the School Division's assessment base. The School Division was mainly reacting to the prospect of the new M.D. being a forerunner for either county status or a new contiguous school division which might diminish Yellowhead's jurisdiction.

In other correspondence on the issue two Edson area residents wrote to the Minister, following the September plebiscite, to express concern about the high percentage increase in taxes in prospect for them if I.D. 14 lost territory to the proposed M.D. The operator of a sawmill located in the south-west part of I.D. 14 wrote to the Minister and the Premier sympathizing with the desire of Drayton Valley area residents to have a local government of their own, but also opposed any of I.D. 14 being included, since it could mean tax increases of 40 to 60% for his business. He also observed that the I.D. part of the road to his sawmill is graded at least twice a week, while the county part is graded once every two weeks.

The I.D.'s effort to mobilize industry opposition to any encroachment of the proposed M.D. on I.D. 14 generated letters to the Minister from Soquip Alberta Inc., Wintershall Oil of Canada Ltd. and the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada. Particular exception was taken to the possibility that the proposed M.D. might consciously build up a 'Heritage Fund' reserve for future requirements. Reference was also

made to the current oil/gas pricing environment as imposing a great burden on all operators. This was leading to the shut-in of production which is no longer economic, thereby reducing field employment.

Noting that the feasibility study projected large property tax increases for certain taxpayers now located in I.D. 14, it was observed that an increase in the order of 50% might, for many operating wells and facilities, equate the tax per barrel to the net operating income per barrel. As a result these operations may be rendered uneconomic, eliminating capital expansion plans and/or shortening the economic lives of wells and pipelines.

The I.D. 14 Advisory Council further demonstrated its concern over the possible loss of territory to the proposed M.D. by placing a public notice in the Drayton Valley Western Review just prior to the September plebiscite. The intent of the notice was to encourage those with a vote to turn down the proposal for a new M.D.: by suggesting it would have a questionable future; by questioning if it was really needed; and by highlighting the consequent tax increases for I.D. taxpayers in general and the oil/gas industry in particular, if the I.D. lost territory to the proposed M.D.

With respect to the I.D.'s lobbying of area M.L.A.'s, following the release of the feasibility study the two M.L.A.'s with constituents most liable to be adversely affected by formation of an M.D. (if it encroached upon I.D. 14) issued a news release. The M.L.A.s for Whitecourt and West Yellowhead:

> "... confirmed that any development of a County of Drayton Valley should not have any effect upon present property taxes or school supplementary requisition in the rest of West Central Alberta. In particular, they both emphasized that any proposals that would increase taxes from present levels in I.D. 14 and the towns and villages along Highway 16 would not be accepted."

At a public meeting in Evansburg on September 26th, 1986 the proposed Drayton Valley area M.D. was discussed. A ratepayers committee was formed to develop a brief, which was subsequently presented to the Minister. The brief stated that the committee was not opposed to the formation of the new M.D., but was concerned that such an act should not hurt, nor place additional burdens upon, other people located in other rural municipalities - such as the 8000 residents of I.D. 14. It was contended that the area around Drayton Valley has enough assessment to form its own municipality without taking any territory from the I.D.

The committee feared that loss of I.D. territory will mean that either taxes will be increased or services will be reduced. The prospect of reduced services was considered 'very unjust' because of a belief that the I.D. is only just beginning to realize the benefits of industrial development. It was also considered 'unrealistic' to expect I.D. residents to pay the same level of taxes as other incorporated rural municipalities with well-developed services. The brief concluded:

> "We have experienced, in the past few years, considerable assessment growth and service levels have definitely improved with that growth. We would like to see this continue. We would like to receive similar services and opportunities other rural residents in the Province have had for years."

Just prior to the plebiscite Alberta Municipal Affairs fielded several phone calls from people in the Wildwood and Evansburg areas of I.D. 14, complaining that they would not have a vote but would be adversely impacted if the proposed M.D. resulted in a significant loss of assessment for I.D. 14. The callers were re-assured to some extent when it was explained: that residents of the Town of Drayton Valley could not vote (the callers had thought the proposal was an 'assessment grab' by the Town); that there would be no immediate effect on schools (the callers were not aware of the difference

between an M.D. and a County); and that the vote would be counted by area (many callers thought the few people in the I.D. area would be outvoted by the larger population in the rest of the proposed M.D.).

2.5.2 Parkland County:

The Parkland County Council and Board of Education have essentially adopted a neutral position on the issue of a new M.D. being established in the Drayton Valley area of the County. The neutral stance is the only position on which there is a consensus. The elected county officials have however been very concerned that they have not been kept properly informed of the government's progress in reaching a decision on the matter. They have pointed out that "it is becoming difficult to properly administer the County because of the uncertainty of the situation." The School Board has been particularly concerned since it has to undertake the required 5-year education planning process.

In general the County has communicated a desire to see the matter settled, and any changes made, sooner rather than later. It has recently re-asserted its neutral position, sensing that this is better than becoming embroiled in the controversy to the extent that Leduc County has, through its actions to vigorously defend the status quo. There is also a feeling however that, by remaining neutral, the ratepayers are being denied an opportunity to receive all the information they require to decide their position.

Apart from the YES Group activity, and the Tomahawk area petition, both discussed earlier (Sections 2.2.2, and 2.4.1), there has been little else in the way of public reaction from Parkland area interests. The Town of Drayton Valley did write to the Minister, following release of the feasibility study, urging the provincial government to provide direction and leadership by reaching a decision on the matter. The Town advocated a speedy resolution since the study had caused local dealings, between the town and surrounding counties, to come to a standstill.

2.5.3 Leduc County:

The Leduc County Council and School Board have, from the inception of the study, opposed any loss of jurisdiction to a new local government formed in the Drayton Valley area. The elected officials were particularly active before and after the September plebiscite, attempting to defend the status quo. Just prior to the plebiscite Leduc County sponsored three 'informational meetings' in Lindale, Breton and Buck Creek. They also wrote to the Minister with their concern that the plebiscite should have been delayed until after information meetings had been held by Alberta Municipal Affairs, to present and explain the study. They also requested that, prior to any decision being made in regard to the proposed M.D., that a detailed study be undertaken to determine the effects on the school system.

Leduc County has consistently grounded its opposition in the belief that the proposed M.D. is simply the fore-runner of a change in school system jurisdictions, through the M.D. pursuing county status or encouraging the formation of a new contiguous school district. As a consequence they have asserted that education governance concerns have been downplayed, by-passed and virtually ignored. The county has also written to the Minister criticizing the manner in which the plebiscite was conducted, to the extent of questioning the veracity of elector declarations, the representativeness of the vote at the voting station level, and whether the plebiscite actually answered the question posed.

County representatives also met with the Ministers of Education and Municipal Affairs in January 1987 to further communicate details of their position, as well as to pass on the Lindale school attendance area petition (Section 2.4.5). The County presented itself as 'willing and capable of providing continued excellent service to all people within its entire present jurisdiction,' and contended that 'the educational needs of the area in question are being more than adequately met.'

The summary brief presented by Leduc County representatives to the Ministers continued as follows:

> "We contend that municipal services have not been neglected in that area. Historically, some residents in the west end of the County have held the perception that the west end of the County has been neglected. The facts, however, indicate that, during the last ten years, there have been compensatory actions taken to correct any perceived neglect. (As evidence of municipal concerns being met the county tabled a map indicating road work done throughout the system in the last few years.)
>
> We are not opposed to the formation of a Municipal District in the immediate Drayton Valley area. We are opposed to any portion of the County of Leduc becoming a part of the proposed M.D. We believe that residents within the County of Leduc benefit from the security of a diversified assessment base.
>
> The downturn in the economy and the additional costs associated with a new municipal unit make the proposed M.D. an unnecessary Governmental expense. Our County recently was affected by the formation of the City of Leduc school system. The cost of educating the same number of students has escalated considerably.
>
> We have grave concerns about the prospect of losing any assessment if any change in boundaries were to occur. Presently we are able to provide adequate municipal and educational services. Any reduction in assessment will affect the delivery of such services.
>
> The present boundaries permit Breton High School and Lindale School to operate effectively. Any revision of boundaries would jeopardize the continued existence of these schools. The (Lindale) petition supports the view that residents in the area fear that the formation of an M.D. will lead to a county formation and the loss of their school."

The Leduc County brief closed by urging that, if hearings related to the issue are to be held, the provincial government should conduct them in a formal manner similar to hearings held by the Local Authorities Board and the Energy Resources Conservation Board.

Leduc County has been strongly supported in its general opposition thrust by the Village of Breton. Since the feasibility study was released the Village's main immediate concern has been the great haste with which the issue is being pursued, and the major substantive concern has been the long-term viability of the Village's high school should it, or part of its attendance area, come under a new municipal jurisdiction. The Village has also stressed the need for considerable further study before a decision is made.

Prior to the plebiscite the Village Council wrote to the Minister expressing shock and surprise "that the provincial government would be proceeding so quickly (to a plebiscite) without public information meetings and a more readable document for public use." The letter also stated:

> "Breton requires the existing services such as schools, hospital, Alberta Wheat Pool and its business section to remain economically viable. The loss of any one will damage Breton and/or its services. Being placed in a new municipality with no vote in the matter and no guarantees as to Breton's stability, leaves Breton in a very tenuous position."

The Village further elaborated on its concerns in a letter to the Minister following the plebiscite. The Village acknowledged that 'Leduc West' voters had clearly chosen to be included in the new M.D., and should be granted their choice. However, it was trusted that the government would honour the results of the majority NO vote in Leduc East, in order to allow these people to 'control their own destiny.'

Other Breton interests have written to the Minister re-inforcing the Village's position, most notably the Breton Women's Institute, which claims an urban and rural membership of long-time area residents. The Institute Secretary has written:

> "We have seen the County provide better and adequate service as they have become a stronger cohesive unit. We have noticed the improvement in roads from homestead days to the present current pavement. We recognize some roads require more upgrading and we are confident the County will fulfill its obligations as priorities are established. We have travelled through other counties and can, without reservation, state the level of road service provided by Leduc County is more than adequate. The education system is excellent and we would not like to risk the attendance areas of Breton or Lindale to boundary changes since county status is the ultimate goal of the YES Group."

The letter ends with the strong recommendation that no changes be made to the existing county boundary, although 'we would be willing to live with a decision to establish a boundary at Buck Lake Creek and/or further west so as not to interfere with any school attendance area in the County of Leduc.'

The Minister has also received several letters from individuals resident in Breton or its immediate area (in addition to the letter-petition, Section 2.4.4). Virtually all correspondents were opposed to the inclusion of any of the Breton school attendance area in the new M.D. A few village residents also wrote at the time of the plebiscite complaining that they did not have a vote. It was explained that their village was already incorporated as an urban municipality, and the plebiscite, dealing with a rural M.D., would not affect the village's status.

Considerable correspondence was received immediately following the plebiscite from residents of the area west of Breton, between Buck Lake and Modeste Creeks. They were anxious to communicate their desire to be included. This public reaction became formalized in the Moose Hill District petition (Section 2.4.2).

Some correspondence was also received from the immediate Lindale area. Those writing generally favoured the status quo, and this reaction became formalized in the Lindale school attendance area petition (Section 2.4.5).

2.5.4 Wetaskiwin County:

There has been limited formal or documented reaction from the west end of Wetaskiwin County since the release of the main feasibility study report in March 1986. There were no separate petitions preceding or following the plebiscite, and only a few pieces of correspondence to the Minister from area residents. One was an invitation to attend a pre-plebiscite public meeting at Alder Flats, and the others were from Buck Lake residents who asked that the area be included. Several telephone inquiries were also fielded by Department staff, after the plebiscite, from individuals expressing disappointment at the NO majority in their voting subdivision.

The Council of the County of Wetaskiwin did communicate its concerns to the Minister just prior to the plebiscite. They reinforced their position, as stated in a previous letter (appended to the main feasibility study), as follows:

> "(a) The dependency of the proposed new Municipal District on oilfield assessment including machinery and equipment as its major source of revenue which could be disastrous in the future. Oil is in an economic slump today, causing oil companies to cut production and staff, eventually reducing assessment. Oil is also a depleting resource and because it is, assessment will certainly decline over the years.
>
> (b) The assessment of machinery and equipment of oil installations is becoming more and more unacceptable to oil companies which have been lobbying the Provincial Government for the removal of this assessment from the tax levy of the municipality and if the Province agrees and removes this machinery and equipment from the assessment, it will place an even greater burden on the municipality to meet its expenditures without inflicting a heavy burden on its taxpayers."

The County Council added its 'grave concern' as to what effect the proposed M.D. would have on the county's school system. It was strongly recommended that the whole matter of forming a new M.D. be put on hold:

> "... until a complete detailed study is made to determine what the ramifications of such a move would be, not only to the County of Wetaskiwin and other municipalities involved, but also to the future of the proposed M.D., and also taking into consideration the upheaval which could be felt by the school systems which have to date been operating in an efficient manner in total co-operation with each other."

2.5.5 M.D. of Clearwater:

There has been no communication from the M.D. on this issue since release of the main study. One resident from the Rose Creek area of the M.D., adjacent to Wetaskiwin County, but south of the 12th Baseline, nas called expressing interest in being kept informed of progress on the issue.

CHAPTER 3: VIABILITY ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction:

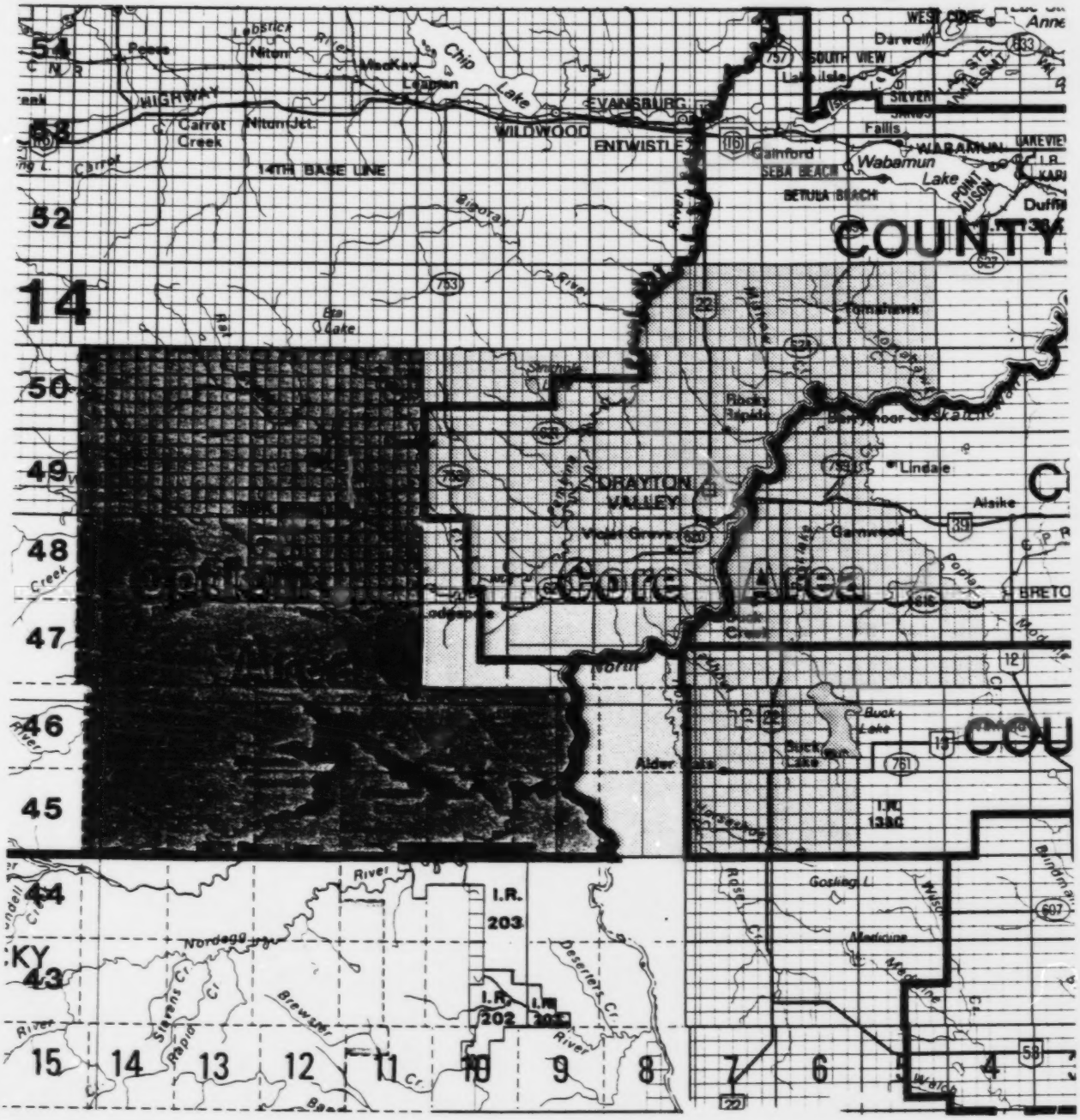
The initial feasibility study examined several possible arrangements for a new municipality, including three different forms and four areal extents. This presentation focuses upon one particular form, a Municipal District, and two possible areal extents. While the intended form of government is fairly firm at this time some questions remain as to the precise areal extent of the proposed M.D. The latter question will be addressed more specifically in the next chapter.

For the purposes of this viability assessment reference is made to a 'core area' being proposed by the Minister on the basis of his review of the public reaction received to date. This 'core area' focuses upon those voting subdivisions where the plebiscite produced YES majorities, but also takes into account areas where there was no clear or meaningful indication either way. The 'core area' is supplemented by an 'option area' comprising that part of I.D. 14 referenced in the plebiscite but outside the proposed 'core area' (see Map 3-1). The Minister's position with respect to these areas will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

The M.D. form of government would affect only existing rural areas within the current jurisdiction of the Counties of Parkland, Leduc and Wetaskiwin, the Municipal District of Clearwater No. 99 as well as Improvement District No. 14. The M.D. would have jurisdiction over municipal affairs only, unlike a county which is responsible for both municipal and school affairs. It is anticipated that the M.D. would become a supporter of the existing school authorities, in much the same way, for example, that the Town of Drayton Valley is a supporter of the Parkland County School System, or the Village of Breton is a supporter of the Leduc County School System, or I.D. 14 is a supporter of the Yellowhead School Division.

The Town of Drayton Valley would remain a separate and distinct urban municipality, responsible for all municipal affairs within its boundaries

Map 3-1
Drayton Valley Area M.D. :
Proposed Core Area And Option Area



(and continuing to support the Parkland County School System). As matters stand at the present time the Town would be the only urban municipality within the boundaries of the M.D.

3.2 General Profile:

Based on re-estimates from data initially presented in the main feasibility study the general profiles for the 'core area,' 'option area' and the aggregate, are presented in Table 3-1.

The viability of the 'core area' can be readily established by reference to comparative fiscal capacity statistics which relate the assessment base to measures of service demand. An M.D. based only on the 'core area' would have a level of equalized assessment per capita of about one and one-half times the current average for all M.D.s, and over twice the average in terms of equalized assessment per local road kilometre. The assessment mix, in terms of proportion of industrial (S.F.F.-type) assessment, would be very healthy at around 85 percent, which compares with a current average for all M.D.s of about 50 percent.

If the 'core area' was supplemented by the 'option area' and the aggregate formed the new M.D., viability would be further enhanced. The aggregate M.D. would have a level of equalized assessment per capita of about twice the current average for all M.D.s, and almost three times the average in terms of equalized assessment per local road kilometre. The assessment mix, in terms of the proportion of industrial (S.F.F.-type) assessment, would be extremely healthy at around 90 percent.

The aggregate population of the proposed M.D. (6165) would be greater than the all M.D.s average (5493), and significantly greater than the average for all non-metropolitan area M.D.s (4088). The 'core area' M.D. would be slightly below the average in terms of areal extent, while the 'aggregate area' M.D. would be about one-quarter larger than the average. The road kilometerage under the proposed M.D.'s responsibility would be about half the average (either configuration). Population density would be slightly below average for the aggregate area, and well above average for the core area only. The ratio of road length to area would be well below average

TABLE 3-1: General Profile of the Proposed 'Core Area,' 'Option Area' and Aggregate Area

	CORE AREA	OPTION AREA	AGGREGATE AREA
POPULATION: Total	6,165	0	6,165
Comprised as follows:			
Parkland Co.	3,850	-	
I.D. 14	15	0	
Leduc Co.	1,300	-	
Wetask. Co.	1,000	-	
M.D. of Clearwater	0	-	
AREA (Hectares): Total	305,000	280,000	585,000
Comprised as follows:			
Parkland Co.	140,000	-	
I.D. 14	30,000	280,000	
Leduc Co.	55,000	-	
Wetask. Co.	50,000	-	
M.D. of Clearwater	30,000	-	
ROAD LENGTHS (Kms): Total	1,360	45	1,405
Comprised as follows:			
Parkland Co.	700	-	
I.D. 14	10	45	
Leduc Co.	400	-	
Wetask. Co.	250	-	
M.D. of Clearwater	-	-	
TOTAL EQ. ASSESSMENT: Total	$122,500,000	$30,000,000	$152,500,000
Comprised as follows:			
Parkland Co.	$ 75,000,000	-	
I.D. 14	$ 5,000,000	$30,000,000	
Leduc Co.	$ 25,000,000	-	
Wetask. Co.	$ 13,000,000	-	
M.D. of Clearwater	$ 4,500,000	-	
S.F.F. EQ. ASSESSMENT: Total	$105,500,000	$30,000,000	$135,500,000
Comprised as follows:			
Parkland Co.	$ 65,000,000	-	
I.D. 14	$ 5,000,000	$30,000,000	
Leduc Co.	$ 21,000,000	-	
Wetask. Co.	$ 10,000,000	-	
M.D. of Clearwater	$ 4,500,000	-	

for the aggregate area and somewhat below average for the core area only. The concentration of population and road inventory in a relatively compact area around Drayton Valley bodes well for the realization of servicing efficiencies, compared to the wide/light scatter of population encountered in the average M.D. However, with the aggregate area configuration, the proposed M.D. may have unusual 'resource road' responsibilities, in the oil-patch/forest reserve tracts to the west, as well as the general issue of farmland access road development.

3.3 Projected Taxation Shifts and Related Finances:

The projected taxation level in the proposed M.D. required calculations involving a series of service finance assumptions laid out in Table 3-2. The assumptions were guided by a concern to allow for the possibility of increased tax costs to simply maintain existing service levels, but there was also an effort to provide room for an improvement in service levels. The proposed M.D. council will ultimately decide the range and level of municipal services to be delivered.

For the purposes of the present estimations provision was made for the continuance of the policing function now undertaken by Parkland County. However, it was assumed that there would be no need for the M.D. to maintain its own municipal planning operation (as Parkland does), preferring to use the services of the Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission. The majority of the population in the new M.D. have been accustomed to the local presence of four Parkland County police constables, but the municipal planning activity is generally viewed as an east-end priority.

In round terms the pro forma budget provided for roads expenditures grossing $2,000 per kilometre, and yielding tax costs of $1,500 per kilometre (after allowing for the Rural Road Grant and other revenues). In effect provision was made for double the net expenditure per kilometre present for a sample group of M.D.s. The $1,500 per kilometre tax cost/net expenditure also compares with estimated 1981-84 averages for the

TABLE 3-2: Service Finance Assumptions:
Proposed Drayton Valley Area M.D.

		Expenditure $ p.c.	Revenue $ p.c.	Net Cost $ p.c.
FUNCTIONS:				
11.	Council	15	-	15
12.	General Admin.	80	15	65
21.	Police	35	5	30
23.	Fire	15	5	10
24.	Emergency Measures	1	0.5	0.5
25.	Ambulance Services	10	-	10
26.	Bylaws Enforcement	5	2	3
31/32:	Transp./Public Works	2,000 (p. km.)	500 (p. km.)	1,500 (p. km.)
41/42:	Water and Sewer System	10	5	5
43.	Garbage Collection/Disposal	10	-	10
51-56:	Social Services	10	8	2
61.	Municipal Planning	2	-	2
62.	Agricultural Services	35	20	15
71/74:	Recreation/Culture	45	15	30

OTHER:

1. General contingency reserve provision (F.97)	10% of the total expenditures on all other functions
2. General unconditional grant revenues	$40 per capita
3. General own-source (non-tax) revenues	$50 per capita
4. Surplus provisions	10% of total function net costs (excluding F.97)

Source: Main Feasibility Study (March 1986), pp 5-18 to 5-21.

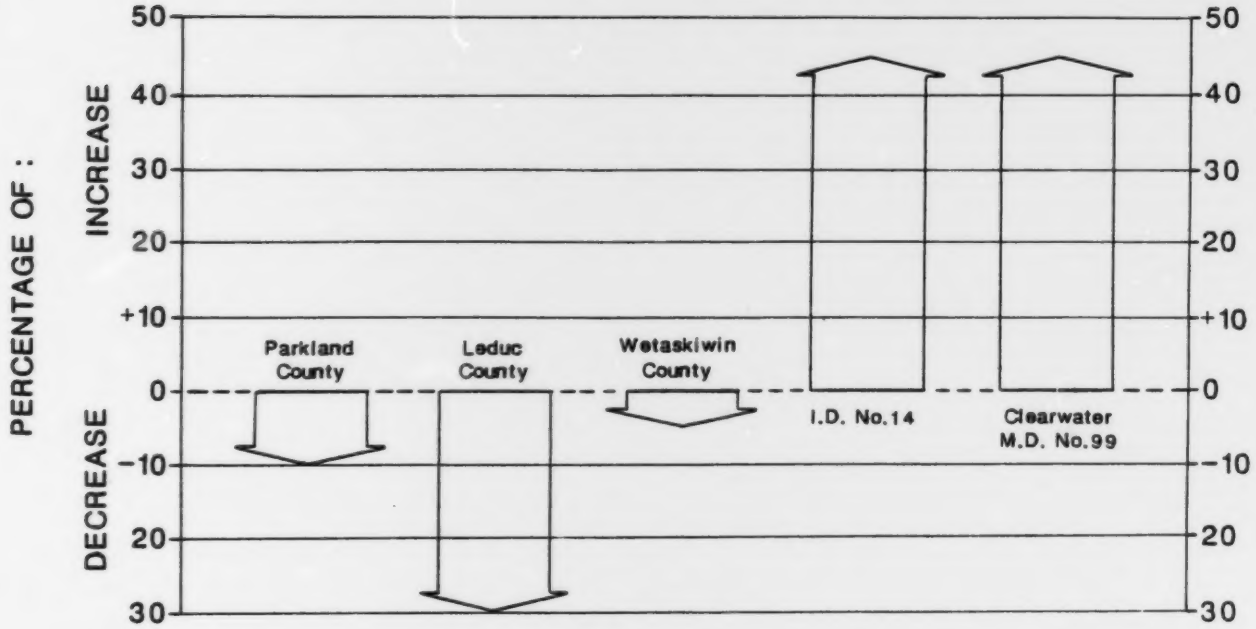
TABLE 3-3: PERCENTAGE SHIFTS IN MUNICIPAL TAXATION: CORE AREA M.D. AND AGGREGATE AREA M.D.

	CORE AREA	AGGREGATE AREA
Existing Municipal Jurisdiction:		
Parkland County	10% LOWER	15% LOWER
Leduc County	30% LOWER	35% LOWER
Wetaskiwin County	5% LOWER	10% LOWER
I.D. No. 14	45% HIGHER	40% HIGHER
Clearwater M.D.	45% HIGHER	40% HIGHER

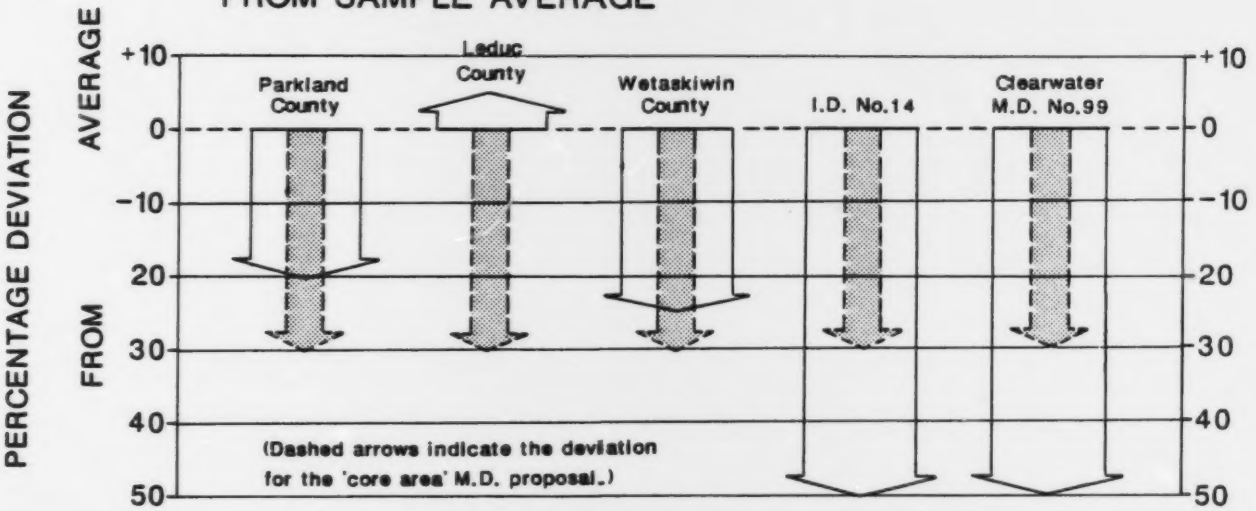
N.B. These are approximate indications of the projected shifts in municipal taxation levels, based on the assumptions stated in the text, and using re-estimates of the original 1984 data in the Main Feasibility Study.

FIGURE 3-1: CORE AREA M.D. IMPACTS

A. PERCENTAGE SHIFTS IN MUNICIPAL TAXATION



B. PERCENTAGE DEVIATION OF MUNICIPAL TAXATION FROM SAMPLE AVERAGE



N.B. Based on 1984 data extracted from the Main Feasibility Study (March1986)

west-ends of the three counties of: $1,150 per km (Parkland); $800 per km (Leduc); and $800 per km (Wetaskiwin).

For all other services (excluding the provision for general contingency reserves) the pro forma allowed for expenditures grossing around $275 per capita and yielding tax costs of about $200 per capita (after allowing for revenues generated by user charges and other non-tax methods). The $200 per capita level used compares with 1981-84 averages of around $120 to $140 per capita for the Counties of Parkland, Leduc and Wetaskiwin, for the same basket of services.

Using these assumptions it is projected that, had the proposed M.D. been in place in 1984, municipal tax rates, by existing jurisdiction, would have been as indicated in Table 3-3. The shifts for the 'core area' M.D. are also diagrammatically represented in Figure 3-1.
Lower municipal taxes are projected for those parts of the three counties that would be incorporated into the new M.D. Higher taxes are projected for those properties within the parts of I.D. 14 and the M.D. of Clearwater that would be incorporated. Municipal taxes in the new M.D. would be around 30% lower than the ten rural municipalities sample average referenced in the main feasibility study (see Figure 3-1B). In summary, the municipal tax levels for current property-owners in Parkland and Wetaskiwin Counties are projected to fall slightly further below average. Current municipal taxpayers in the Leduc County part of the proposed M.D. would experience the greatest shift, from a little above the average at present to the 30% below average level. Taxpayers in those parts of I.D. No. 14 and the M.D. of Clearwater incorporated into the new M.D. would continue to experience below average municipal tax levels, although they would not be so far below average as is presently the case.

For the 'aggregate area' M.D. the projected decreases in taxation are somewhat greater, while the projected increases in taxation are somewhat less. The deviation from the sample average would also be a little greater for the 'aggregate area' M.D., compared to the 'core area' M.D.

The projected level of taxation is purely indicative of what might be expected should the basic assumptions hold. The M.D. council would have the flexibility to pursue different strategies. For example, the tax rates could be lowered: by reducing the number of services delivered by the municipality; by settling for only a basic, rather than superior level or quality of servicing in those it chooses to deliver; or by reducing the provision for contingency and longer-term reserves. Acting in a vice versa fashion would tend to increase the tax rate.

3.4 Special Challenges:

The new M.D. is likely to face a major challenge in relation to the taxpayers now located within I.D. 14 and the M.D. of Clearwater, but incorporated into the new M.D. Unless some means are employed to more equitably balance the revenue furnished and the services received by these taxpayers there would arise the same 'west-end subsidizing east-end' syndrome that has prompted consideration of the new M.D. The extent of the challenge posed would depend on the significance of affected I.D. or M.D. industrial taxpayers, who do not also operate in the parts of Parkland, Leduc and Wetaskiwin Counties incorporated into the new M.D. It is conceivable that the aggregate property tax bill could remain about the same, or might even be lowered, for those oil-patch interests with operations extending across existing municipal boundaries.

The new M.D. is also likely to face a challenge, mainly in relation to any jurisdiction acquired from I.D. 14, that its rural residents should not be the only area residents to directly benefit from accessing the low-cost industrial tax base. By so doing the M.D. taxpayers would be granted the prospect of lowered taxes, from tax levels which are already comparatively low in relation to those now experienced in the Town of Drayton Valley. Yet the Town also has a major role in servicing the industry operating in its rural hinterland. The new M.D. may therefore need to consider some form of industrial tax-base-sharing with the Town, similar in concept perhaps to the Industrial Tax Transfer provided by some I.D.s to urban municipalities located within their boundaries.

A tax transfer scheme could be supplemental to individual inter-municipal cost-sharing agreements between the M.D. and the Town for particular services, or it could take the form of an unconditional block grant to the Town as compensation for the services it provides to M.D. taxpayers. Such a scheme would likely have the effect of raising M.D. tax levels closer to current levels, while yielding the prospect of lower tax levels for Town taxpayers. Again though, it would be the industry now operating in the I.D. 14 area which would be paying the lion's share of the additional tax burden. The toleration of this burden would be eased to the extent that the same industrial interests had property or suppliers or workers based in the Town, and therefore in a position to benefit from the prospect of lower Town taxes and/or better town-based services. However this all depends on satisfactory negotiations between the new M.D. and the Town.

3.5 Operational Concerns:

In terms of operational viability the proposed M.D. will inherit its fair share of assets currently held by the existing municipalities. This would be in the form of land, physical plant, rolling stock, cash or investments, and would be adequate to launch the proposed M.D. with manageable and reasonable start-up costs. The provincial government may require the new M.D. to take the relevant employees of the existing counties.

The main servicing effort would be in relation to road maintenance and road construction. In common with most M.D.s this function will account for around two-thirds of the total expenditures. Construction expenses normally make up around one-quarter to one-third of roads budgets and it is expected that the M.D. will contract out most of this activity. With regard to maintenance the M.D. will probably be interested in using a mixture of its own plant and workers, and some private grader contractors. Shop facilities might be available in the existing Parkland County facility in Drayton Valley (although this also doubles as a school bus garage).

It can be expected that there will be demands for better roads to service resource developments outside the settled areas. This will possibly entail the designation of more secondary roads by the provincial government, and a heavy maintenance responsibility for the new M.D. It may actually wish to spur the improvement of such roads by sharing in the costs of construction or upgrading. In other areas local, farmland-access, road networks are less complete than is normally the case. There will therefore be additional expenses associated with extending and filling in this network. These expenses will be compounded by the fact that the terrain is fairly difficult, with many deep ravines, unstable slopes, and numerous bridging requirements. The terrain factor will be recognized to some extent in the Rural Road Grant formula applied by the provincial government, but the proposed M.D. will have to be prepared to face above average expenses in this area.

Apart from roads the major M.D. expense will be associated with running the council and, in particular, generally administering the new unit. In the first instance these operations could probably be headquartered in what is currently the Parkland County sub-office in Drayton Valley.

As indicated earlier the M.D. council would be able to decide on the range and level of servicing that is appropriate and this would be particularly important in relation to police services. The R.C.M.P. provides a service to rural areas, at no local expense, through a contract with the provincial government. Some rural municipalities, such as Parkland, have chosen to supplement this with their own police force. The M.D. could continue this special servicing, (as has been budgeted here at a cost of over one (equalized) mill), or it could opt for a beefed-up bylaw enforcement operation combined with greater reliance on the R.C.M.P. service, or it could simply opt for no formal bylaw enforcement activity.

It can be expected that fire protection for M.D. residents would continue to be handled predominantly by the force now operating out of the Town of Drayton Valley, in association with squads of volunteers operating from fire halls established in outlying areas. Little change is also anticipated in relation to ambulance servicing, or the operation of the regional sanitary landfill system (garbage disposal).

If social services are to be provided to M.D. residents this can probably be best accomplished through a joint Family and Community Social Services (F.C.S.S.) program with the Town of Drayton Valley. Municipal planning needs can be met mainly by accessing the resources of the Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission.

The M.D. would have to organize its own Agricultural Services Board operation, tailored to particular area needs. Also, in the area of recreation and library services the new M.D. will probably wish to consider a cost-sharing arrangement with the Town for major facility access, while grant-funding various community associations throughout the area to enable them to serve as mini-recreation service agencies.

3.6 Summary:

In summary, an M.D. on the basis of either the 'core area' or the 'aggregate area' appears to be eminently viable financially and operationally, and holds the prospect of comparatively low municipal tax levels. Special challenges would have to be faced (in the 'aggregate area' scenario) in dealing with certain 'west-end' industrial taxpayers, now located in I.D. 14, and in reconciling the significant direct benefits flowing to M.D. residents while the Town of Drayton Valley services industry located in the M.D.

CHAPTER 4: AREA DEFINITION

4.1 Introduction:

Based on the petitions, plebiscite results and public reaction received following release of the main feasibility study, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has proposed a 'core area,' with an 'option area,' to be the subject of a round of informed public consultation activity (see Map 3-1). The Minister has let it be known to all concerned that he is prepared to make adjustments to the boundaries of these areas depending on the outcome of the processes of information-dissemination and public consultation which he is now providing for.

More specifically, the Minister is prepared to consider further boundary changes on two levels:

1. Major: The only area where major changes will be considered is in relation to the 'option area' of I.D. 14. All or part of this option area could be included or excluded from the proposed M.D., which will otherwise be formed around the proposed 'core area' (see Map 4-1).

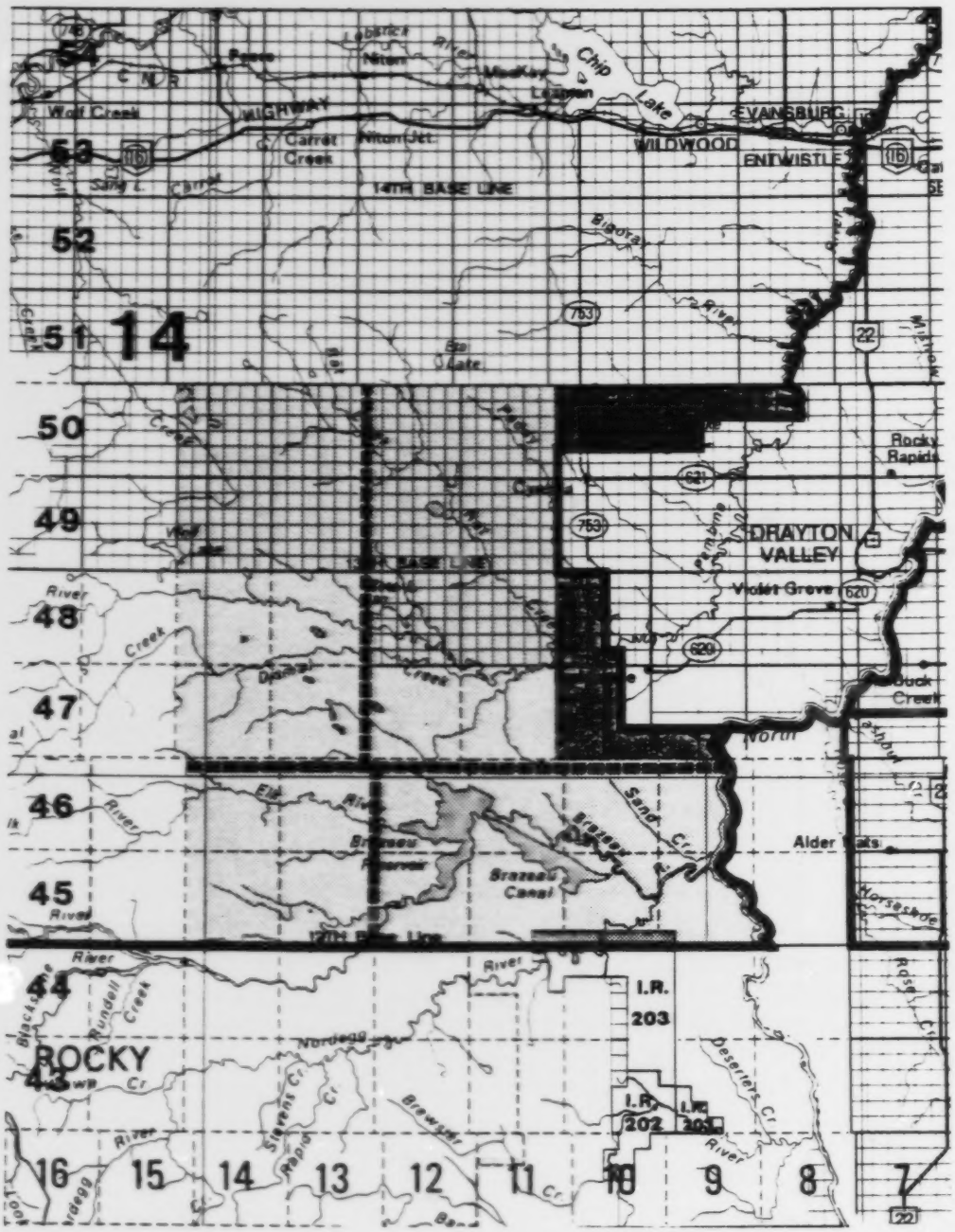
2. Minor: The Minister will consider minor amendments to the proposed 'core area' boundary, with respect to the immediate fringe areas on either side of the boundary.

As will be elaborated below, such minor changes could involve, for example: the possible exclusion of the Tomahawk and Moon Lake areas of Parkland County, or the addition of adjacent areas; the possible exclusion of the Berrymoor and Moose Hill areas of Leduc County, or the addition of adjacent areas such as Lindale-Carnwood or Alsike-Breton; the possible exclusion of the Alder Flats-Buck Lake-North Norbuck areas, or the addition of adjacent areas such as Pendryl-Winfield; and the possible exclusion of the Rose Creek area of the M.D. of Clearwater (see Map 4-2).

Concerning the major boundary issue affecting the south-east part of I.D. 14 within the 'option area,' the Minister is inclining towards the following positions.

MAP 4-1

I.D. No. 14 Option Area Definition

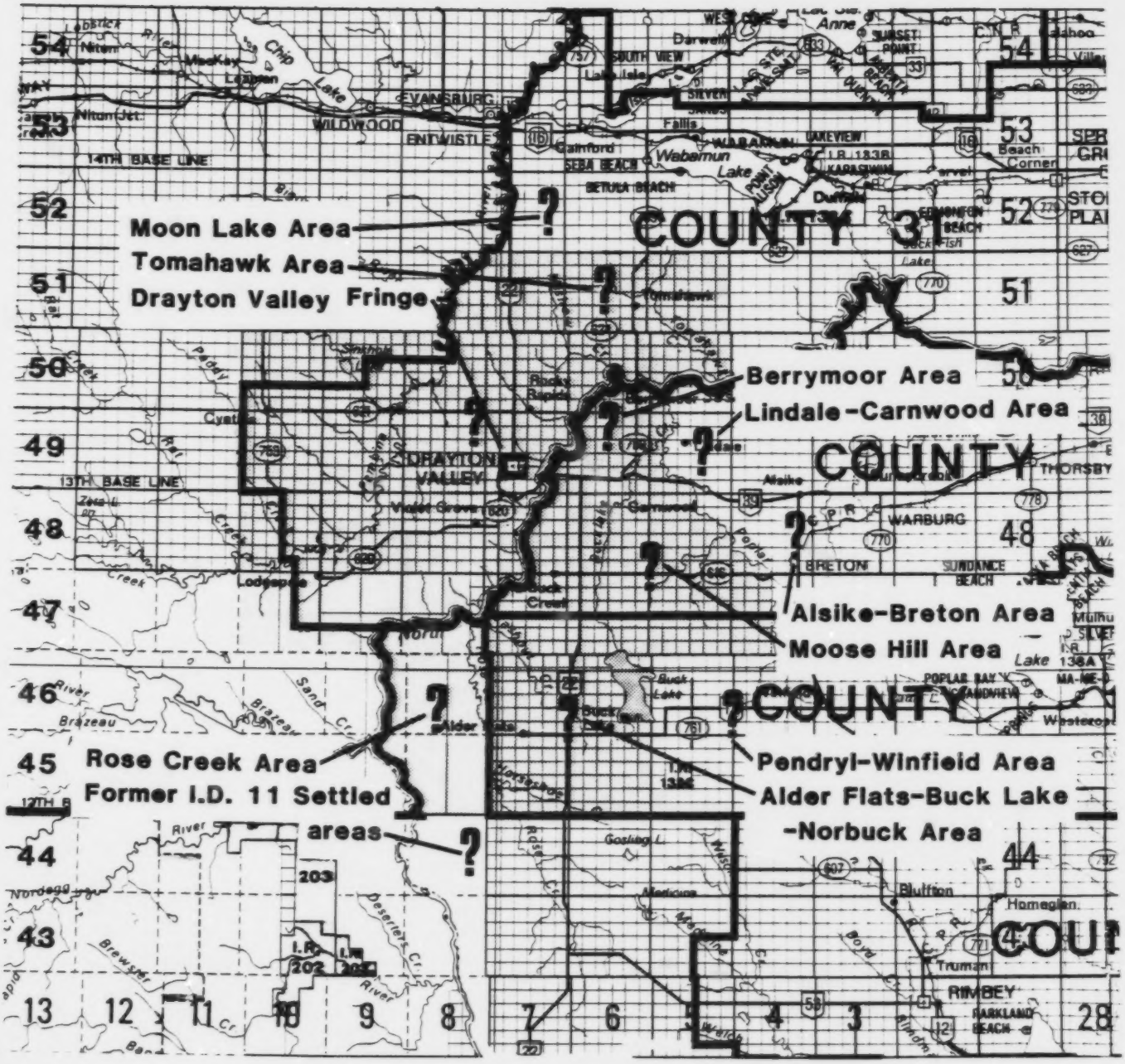


CORE AREA _____

OPTION AREA (and scenario areas) _____

MAP 4-2

Area Definition Queries : Core Area Fringe



i) An acknowledgment that the wider Drayton Valley area community has a more legitimate 'claim' on this part of I.D. 14 than the rural communities ranging along the Yellowhead Highway corridor. The Minister would not therefore be inclined to incorporate this extensive tract of unoccupied Crown land.

ii) A reluctance to incorporate this area into a Drayton Valley Area M.D. until the broader issue of the municipal incorporation of the provincial Green Area is settled. This matter is presently being addressed within the provincial government. Until a new policy is established the position is that the recent incorporation of the former I.D. No. 10 as the M.D. of Clearwater does not necessarily stand as a precedent for future incorporation of existing unincorporated areas.

iii) Until a policy is established, and while the area remains unincorporated but under the jurisdiction of I.D. No. 14, consideration will be given to amending existing legislation to enable the 'core area' M.D. and the Town of Drayton Valley to benefit from the Industrial Tax Transfer program, operated currently by I.D. 14 (though only with respect to urban municipal jurisdictions within its boundary).

Further perspective on the 'option area' issues is presented below, as part of a general commentary on the area definition matters which remain to be settled.

4.2 Improvement District No. 14

As presently proposed, through a squaring off process, certain parts of I.D. 14 north of Cynthia and south-west of Lodgepole are included in the 'core area.' The 'option area' consists of the remaining part of the area of I.D. 14 which was referenced in the plebiscite and in the main feasibility study.

The 'option area' portion of I.D. 14 is virtually devoid of residents and local authority roads, but is rich in industrial assessment, the revenue from which helps to subsidize the cost of providing services to the main settled areas of I.D. 14 along the Yellowhead Highway. The main justification for including this area of I.D. 14 in a new local government - as articulated in the main feasibility study - related to several indications of Drayton Valley's prime and significant servicing influence into the area.

For example, the Hospital District, centered in Drayton Valley, encompasses virtually all of the area in question, partly because of the convenience of Drayton Valley as a helicopter base for emergency ambulance service to the area. Also, there are school system ties between the Brazeau Reservoir area and the Parkland County schools centered in Drayton Valley. Most notably, the town is clearly the main oil-patch servicing centre into fields as far west as Brazeau River and West-Pem, and as far north as the Cyn-Pem and Bigoray fields, in addition to its prime role in servicing the extensive Pembina field.

The reservations about incorporating this area into the proposed M.D. relate partly to broader government concerns over the municipal incorporation of the provincial Green Area, and partly to concerns over the municipal tax increases that would be experienced by I.D. 14 taxpayers should it lose the area (approximately 20 percent of its tax base, with little or no servicing costs).

4.2.1. The Green Area Issue:

All of the I.D. area (as well a large part of the Cynthia-Lodgepole area of Parkland County) is within the provincial Green Area, the intent of which is to prevent or limit the permanent settlement that normally provides the raison d'etre and rationale for incorporated municipal government status. The Green Area is predominantly Crown Land, some of it under various forms of leasehold, but it is generally unoccupied from a settlement perspective. Although the M.D. of Clearwater was recently incorporated with the inclusion of a

massive extent of Green Area the provincial government is uncertain about letting this stand as a precedent for future M.D. incorporations.

Part of the motivation for this emerging policy stems from the apparent inequities of turning these high revenue/low cost areas over for the sole use of the rural residents of an M.D. At present the I.D. Tax Transfer scheme, operational only in I.D.s because they are under provincial jurisdiction, allows urban municipalities within the I.D. to also share in the assessment largesse. There are no such obligations upon an M.D. For the case in hand approximately 4,500 rural residents would be enriched, through lower taxes and/or better services, at the expense of higher taxes and/or reduced services for over 8,000 residents of I.D. 14. - if the 'option area' was added to the 'core area.'

The Green Area incorporation issue is not present for other local authorities such as hospital districts or school districts. This is because these bodies are intrinsically inter-municipal or multi-municipal in nature, and provide for an automatic sharing of costs and revenue bases among large or small, urban or rural.

4.2.2. The Tax Shift Equity Issue:

There remains the question of whether it is fair for the taxpayers in a diminished I.D. 14 to have to shoulder increased municipal taxes as a consequence of the proposed M.D. The projected percentage increase of about 20 percent is striking, but it is equally striking that the projected level of taxation, after loss of the territory in question, remains well below the average. This is on account of the very low level of taxation currently enjoyed by I.D. 14 taxpayers. The municipal tax level in I.D. 14 would move up from being less than 50 percent of the average to about 60 percent of the average (observed for a sample group of rural municipalities).

I.D. 14 is also concerned to retain jurisdiction of the area in question to bolster its desire to incorporate as a Municipal District itself, on the same basis as was achieved by the M.D. of Clearwater. As noted earlier though, there is some question if the government will permit further such M.D. incorporations. While it is possible that the I.D. would be allowed to incorporate some of the Green Area within its boundaries, it is unlikely that it will be permitted to incorporate outlying tracts, such as the area being discussed here.

Those Drayton Valley interests lobbying for the proposed M.D. have deemed it imperative that the new M.D. incorporate the I.D. 14 'option' area. They have also taken the position that I.D. taxpayers have benefitted at their expense by having had access for many years to assessment on industrial properties serviced from the Drayton Valley area. It is considered that the area has 'done more than enough to support other areas' and now deserves exclusive use of the tax-base for its own local self-government purposes.

4.2.3. Tax Shift Response Options:

Should it be deemed appropriate to reduce the percentage increase in taxation projected for I.D. 14 taxpayers, this could be accomplished by reducing the portion of the 'option area' to be incorporated into the proposed M.D. (Map 4-1). For illustrative purposes two scenarios have been considered: one would trim the two most westerly ranges from the 'option area' (i.e. Ranges 13 and 14), while the other scenario involves trimming off all but the two most southerly townships (i.e. Townships 45 and 46). The latter area is currently unorganized for school purposes, but an island of assessment within it, around the Brazeau Reservoir, is credited to the Parkland County School System.

The two westerly ranges have been estimated to account for about 50% of the assessment in the I.D. 14 plebiscite area. In round terms therefore the increase in taxation experienced by I.D. 14 taxpayers would fall from about 20 percent to about 10 percent if these two

ranges remained within I.D. 14 jurisdiction. The proposed 'aggregate area' M.D. would experience some deterioration in fiscal capacity but these measures would remain well above average. The potential tax shifts projected for M.D. taxpayers somewhere in between the shifts for the 'core area' and the 'aggregate area' noted in Table 3-3.

The southern scenario area accounts for about 25 percent of the assessment in the I.D. 14 plebiscite area. In round terms therefore the increase in taxation experienced by I.D. 14 taxpayers would fall from about 20 percent to between 5 and 10 percent if the loss to the I.D. was limited to this southern strip (plus the 'core area' parts). The proposed 'aggregate area' M.D. would experience a somewhat greater deterioration in fiscal capacity, but would remain eminently viable. The potential tax shifts projected for M.D. taxpayers.

4.3 Parkland County:

4.3.1 Tomahawk/Moon Lake:

The Parkland component of the 'Core Area' corresponds closely to the Drayton Valley senior high school attendance area. The plebiscite results for this area indicated very strong support for inclusion in the proposed M.D. with the very notable exception of the Tomahawk area, and, to a lesser extent, the Moon Lake area. As a consequence, consideration should be given to whether these areas should be excluded.

Some reports indicated that a major factor in the negative vote was a comparative lack of information, prior to the vote, on how the Tomahawk area might be affected if it was to be included in the proposed M.D. Although an information meeting was held just prior to the plebiscite, the vote was strongly negative, and was followed by a petition stating that the residents of Ranges 5 and 6, Township 5 wished to remain in the County of Parkland.

The viability of the proposed M.D. would not be adversely affected by the exclusion of this area. The probability is that viability would be improved since servicing costs are unlikely to be covered by the limited assessment base in the area (although there is a small oil/gas field). The proposed M.D. would also be more compact, assisting the realization of operating efficiencies.

4.3.2. Drayton Valley Urban Fringe:

The Town of Drayton Valley has in recent years expressed interest in expanding its boundaries through annexation of adjacent areas with an urban character or urban service needs. The Town has experienced difficulties with sporadic fringe developments, with a major unincorporated urban community on its doorstep (Poplar Ridge), and with industries that otherwise might have located or expanded in the Town opting for a nearby rural site. There is therefore a need to consider the possible effect of such an annexation on the viability of the proposed M.D.

The area in question contains about 700 residents, predominantly in mobile home developments. The area also appears to contain enough industrial assessment to yield the prospect of a small net revenue gain to the town - eventually, if not immediately - even though the Town would become responsible for the Poplar Ridge trailer park area and some extensive acreage development. The financial viability of the proposed M.D. is unlikely to be impaired by such an annexation, and there is the possibility that it could be improved if it, a rural municipality, was relieved of responsibility for servicing what would otherwise be the most significant urban population concentration in the new jurisdiction. The proposed M.D. would also expect to lose some industrial assessment to compensate the town for having to service additional residential developments.

While the remainder of the proposed M.D. might actually benefit from the annexation it will inevitably be viewed as detrimental by those liable to be annexed into the town, and these interests will strongly

resist such a move. The Town of Drayton Valley is a comparatively high tax jurisdiction and it would be very much in the rural resident's financial interest to remain in a rural jurisdiction, while benefitting indirectly from the proximity of town delivered services. Formation of the proposed M.D. will further entrench this position since those liable to be annexed are likely to experience even lower tax levels than currently apply under Parkland County jurisdiction. It should also be recalled that the immediate rural fringe areas exhibited comparatively high 'sign-rates' for the July petition, and in the September plebiscite they registered the highest level of support for inclusion in the new M.D.

Therefore, while the possibility has been raised that the proposed M.D. may lose territory around the town to annexation, this must be considered a remote possibility. The Town may have to resign itself to its current boundaries for the foreseeable future, and trust that the M.D. council will be more sympathetic to the concerns that are prompting the annexation plans. It is likely that there will always be a major disparity in tax rates between the town and the rural jurisdiction. This will constitute a powerful incentive for further sporadic fringe development, with businesses opting for a rural site in the same way as Amoco and Mobil have done recently. This may well become a vicious circle from the Town's perspective. However this may change as the Town's financial health improves through assessment growth and reduced financial obligations.

4.4 Leduc County:

4.4.1 Lindale Area:

The presence of the school at Lindale, and uncertainty over how it would fare if new school system arrangements were to follow formation of the M.D., has prompted particular area interest in the issue. A petition has been received from 180 area residents requesting that the Lindale school remain operational under its present municipal jurisdiction. The school's attendance area straddles Buck Lake Creek

and also encompasses parts of the Berrymoor and Carnwood areas. In the plebiscite the Berrymoor area voted clearly in favour of inclusion, while the Carnwood and Lindale areas indicated no clear position either way.

Only the Berrymoor part of the Lindale school attendance area is considered part of the 'Core Area' at present. The eastern boundary follows Buck Lake Creek in the north and Modeste Creek in the south. Lindale and Carnwood lie to the east or north of these boundary creeks. As matters stand at present therefore, Lindale will remain under the municipal jurisdiction of Leduc County, which will also continue with its existing, unaltered, school jurisdiction. The part of the proposed M.D. which is incorporated from part of Leduc County (Buck Creek - Berrymoor - Moose Hill) would become a supporter of the Leduc County School System.

It is presumed that those from Lindale and Carnwood who voted in favour of inclusion in the proposed M.D. mainly reside south or west of Modeste Creek, while those opposed mainly reside to the north and east of this creek. The inclusion or exclusion of the north-eastern area would not materially affect the overall viability of the proposed M.D. If anything it would probably be to the benefit of the M.D. if the area was excluded.

4.4.2 Moose Hill District:

The Moose Hill District of Leduc County refers here to that part of the county lying between Buck Lake Creek and what is known locally as Modeste Creek (although the county map refers to it as Poplar Creek). The area has been considered part of the 'Core Area' even though its votes were tallied as part of the Leduc East plebiscite voting division (which voted NO). The Moose Hill station tally registered one of the highest approval rates for inclusion in the proposed M.D. Area interests were also quick to protest the unfairness of the plebiscite dividing the Leduc County vote, when no other jurisdiction was so treated. It was pointed out that in

aggregate, the Leduc County voters had a slight majority in favour of inclusion, i.e. a net YES position.

To support its case for inclusion the Breton area branch of the YES group organized the comprehensive petition discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.2). The results indicated a very high level of support for inclusion in the new M.D. (89 percent of those willing and able to participate, after a complete canvass of the area) and this has been taken to justify inclusion in the 'Core Area.'

The area in question probably represents somewhat greater servicing costs than the proposed M.D. could expect to recoup from the area assessment base. The viability of the proposed M.D. is such however that it can comfortably absorb such an area even if the M.D. was denied the full extent of the I.D. 14 'option area.'

Residents of the area appear to be clear that it will be to their benefit to being included in the proposed M.D. There is some anxiety however that they will be denied this choice by Breton area interests strongly opposed to inclusion. This has led to a formal pledge, by a representative group, of their support for the maintenance of the Breton High School. This pledge goes to the extent of welcoming, and being prepared to be bound by, a government directive to this effect as and when this might become appropriate (This might only become necessary if and when changes in education governance are being contemplated). The group has stated: "It is our sincere wish to become a part of the M.D. (of Drayton Valley) and it is also our desire to maintain the Breton School District as is".

4.4.3 Breton/Alsike Areas:

The Breton-Alsike areas of Leduc County have clearly registered opposition to being included in a new Drayton Valley-centered municipality. It is proposed that these wishes be respected and that no further consideration be given to including the Breton-Alsike areas in the proposed M.D., unless a new position is advanced.

4.5 Wetaskiwin County:

4.5.1 Alder Flats/Buck Lake:

This plebiscite area indicated no clear majority either way with respect to inclusion in the proposed M.D. To permit the realization of a clearer decision it has been included in the 'Core Area.' Representations were received from the area to delay the plebiscite issue until a school-related issue had been resolved, and until residents could become more informed about the proposed M.D. Some also requested that the plebiscite offer three choices for their municipal future: the proposed M.D.; joining the M.D. of Clearwater; and the status quo. The question of whether this area needs to be further involved in the area definition process is also tied in to whether the adjacent Rose Creek area of the M.D. of Clearwater is to be included in the proposed M.D.

The area in question would probably constitute an asset to the proposed M.D., bringing an assessment base which would be more than sufficient to cover servicing costs. It would therefore tend to enhance the viability of the proposed M.D. Area taxpayers would experience lower rates of taxation (in the order of 5 to 10 percent decreases), though probably not as large a decrease as would be realized if the area joined the M.D. of Clearwater.

Whatever municipal future is chosen the Alder Flats/Buck Lake area will remain on the outer periphery of whatever jurisdiction applies. Drayton Valley is probably the closest centre for most residents in time-distance terms, because of the paved highway access. Rocky Mountain House (seat of the M.D. of Clearwater) will be a more competitive centre once the current paving project is completed. Both of these centres are considerably closer than the present county seat in Wetaskiwin.

4.5.2 North Norbuck Area:

The North Norbuck area of Wetaskiwin County is here defined as that part of Township 47 east of the Buck Mountain Community Pasture and west of Modeste Creek. The residents of this area have indicated strong interest, through participating in petitions and by presentations at meetings, in being considered for inclusion in the proposed M.D. They associated with the Breton Area YES Group petition undertaken after the plebiscite (in which Norbuck area residents were unable to participate). Their 'sub-petition' indicated virtually unanimous support among those approached.

The area is too small to significantly affect the viability of the proposed M.D. Its inclusion is probably more dependent on whether the Moose Hill District of Leduc County and the Alder Flats/Buck Lake area of Wetaskiwin County are to be included in the final determination. Should the Norbuck area be actively considered the Buck Mountain Community Pasture might also be considered for inclusion. There could also be a spill-over effect into the Pendryl-Winfield areas although it has been presumed at present that these areas are not interested in being included.

4.6 Clearwater M.D.:

4.6.1 Rose Creek Area:

This small northern extremity of the M.D. of Clearwater has been included in the proposed 'Core Area.' It appears to be totally devoid of resident population. The area is presently under the Green Area designation, but large parts of it are being considered for opening to agricultural settlement. All access to the area is presently through Wetaskiwin County.

The area would be an asset to the proposed M.D. and would enhance its viability. The inclusion of the area would be especially logical if

any part of the west end of Wetaskiwin was also included in the proposed M.D.

4.6.2 Adjacent Settled Areas:

It might be noted that there is some settlement in the M.D. of Clearwater, just south of the 12th Baseline/Rose Creek area, which is separated from the main part of the M.D. by a large expanse of virtually unsettled Green Area. If the area definition process does deal with the possibility of including the Rose Creek area it may also be worthwhile considering the addition of the adjacent settled area which is also in the M.D. of Clearwater. (These would be the occupied parts of the former I.D. No. 11.)

4.7 Summary:

In summary, the area definition process, preceding a firm determination of the boundaries of the proposed M.D., needs to engage the following issues:

- The general question of municipal incorporation of the provincial Green Area.
- The extent of the I.D. 14 'option area' to be included.
- The urban fringe annexation interests of the Town of Drayton Valley.
- The possible inclusion of those parts of the Lindale and Carnwood areas lying north-west of Modeste Creek, in Leduc County.
- The possible inclusion of the Breton-Alsike areas of Leduc County.
- The possible inclusion of the settled parts of the former I.D. No. 11, in the Rose Creek area of the M.D. of Clearwater.
- The possible exclusion of areas within the proposed 'Core Area.'

CHAPTER 5: IMPACTED JURISDICTIONS OVERVIEW

5.1 Introduction:

Depending on the final outcome of the area definition process discussed in the previous chapter the impacts resulting from formation of the proposed M.D. would be felt by up to four existing rural municipalities - the Counties of Parkland, Leduc and Wetaskiwin, and the M.D. of Clearwater - as well as I.D. 14, which is actively striving to become a full-fledged rural municipality. In general terms therefore, it should be acknowledged that all five bodies are liable to be diminished to varying extents, although all are currently very large rural municipalities in one or several respects. This confers a general capacity to fairly readily absorb a reduction in jurisdiction, while the largeness also makes them particularly prone to losses of allegiance in areas most distant from the seat of local government.

The overall effect of forming the proposed M.D. would be greatest for Parkland County, although there is a good measure of offsetting or balancing in the extent to which various factors would be diminished (Figure 5-1). I.D. 14 is the other local authority which would be strongly affected, although there is a much greater imbalance between the projected loss of assessment and the reduction in expenditure obligations.

The net effect of the diminution interrelationships is best summarized by 'fiscal capacity' statistics, which inter-relate the assessment base with measures of people-serving or road network responsibilities (Figure 5-2). Such statistics are the best single indicator of the relative ability to provide a standard 'basket' of municipal goods and services at any given level of taxation. All the potentially impacted jurisdictions, with the exception of Wetaskiwin County, enjoy above average fiscal capacities at present. They would continue to do so if they lost jurisdiction to the proposed M.D.

The healthy fiscal capacities correlate with below average municipal tax rates for all but Leduc County, which rated around the sample average

(1984 data from the Main Feasibility Study Report) (Figure 5-3). Note that Wetaskiwin County also has below average tax levels despite its only average fiscal capacities. This general pattern also holds for comparisons made on a standard property basis (Figure 5-4).

The existing jurisdictions would mostly experience small increases in municipal taxation if territory was lost to the proposed M.D. The exception is I.D. 14, which would experience an increase in the range of 20 to 25 percent. However, the new tax levels would still be below the average monitored, especially for I.D. 14. Leduc County municipal taxes would be pushed distinctly above the average (Figure 5-5).

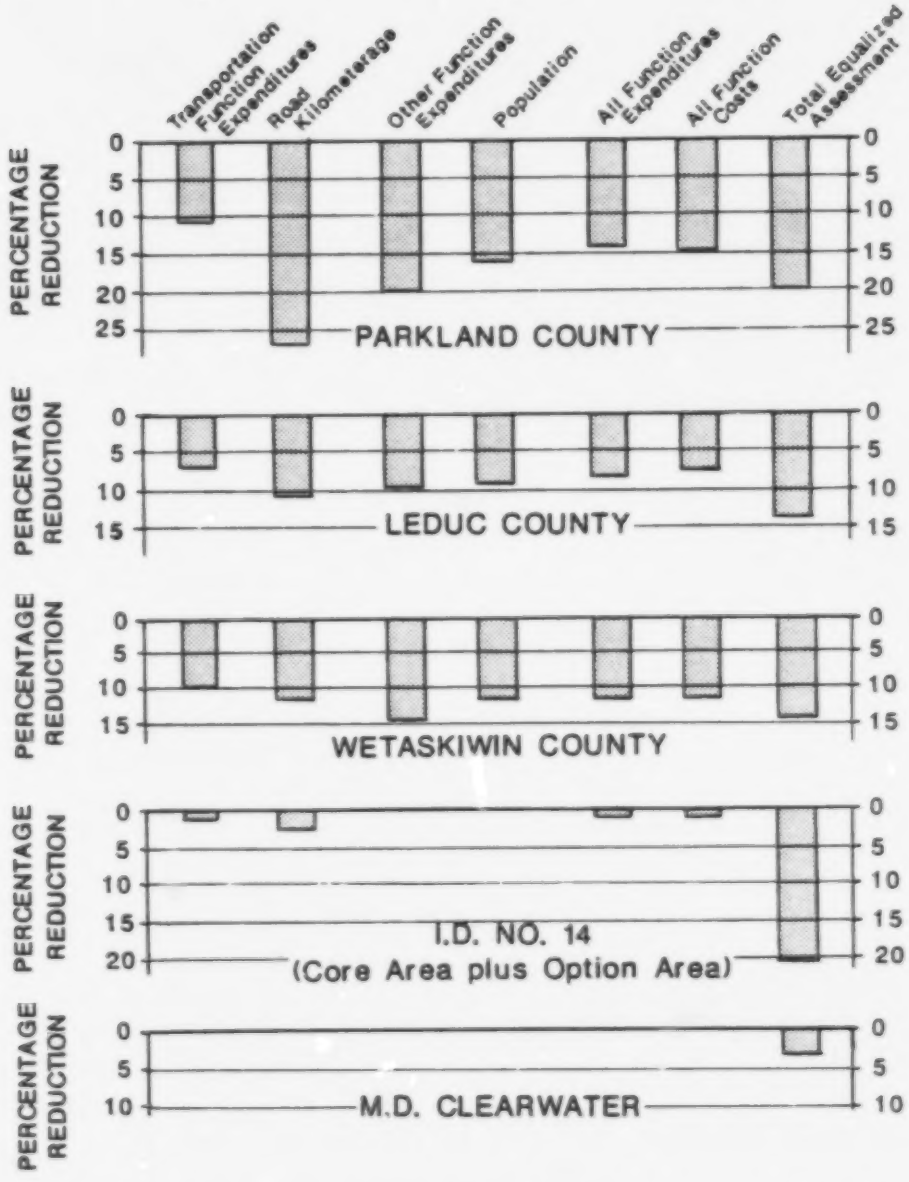
Before addressing each impacted jurisdiction individually it should be noted that, over the long-term, all three counties have served their 'west-ends' well. Parkland County, to its credit, has gone to the extent of establishing a major sub-office in Drayton Valley. Although Leduc and Wetaskiwin Counties have not responded recently in such a major way there is an important historical point. Before the discovery of oil in the western areas in the early 1950's, it was the rich farm assessment base in the eastern areas that helped to subsidize the developing western areas with their poorer soils. In return the 'east-ends' have been compensated for their special or earlier efforts to service the 'west-ends', through benefits conferred by the low-cost oil-patch industrial assessment base concentrated in the western areas. The question that may be posed now is: Can 'quits' be called? Would the eastern areas be better off without their cantankerous 'west-ends', or would the integrity of the existing bodies be seriously impaired?

5.2 Parkland County:

If the proposed M.D. is formed the diminished County of Parkland would become more purely and more predominantly a semi-urban, rather than rural, municipality. Any remaining rural divisions would almost certainly be in a distinct minority situation. However most, if not all, would be quite conveniently located vis-a-vis the county seat in Stony Plain (in comparison with the existing west-end divisions). They would probably be

FIGURE 5-1 : IMPACTED JURISDICTIONS :

PROJECTED PERCENTAGE REDUCTIONS IN SELECTED FACTORS

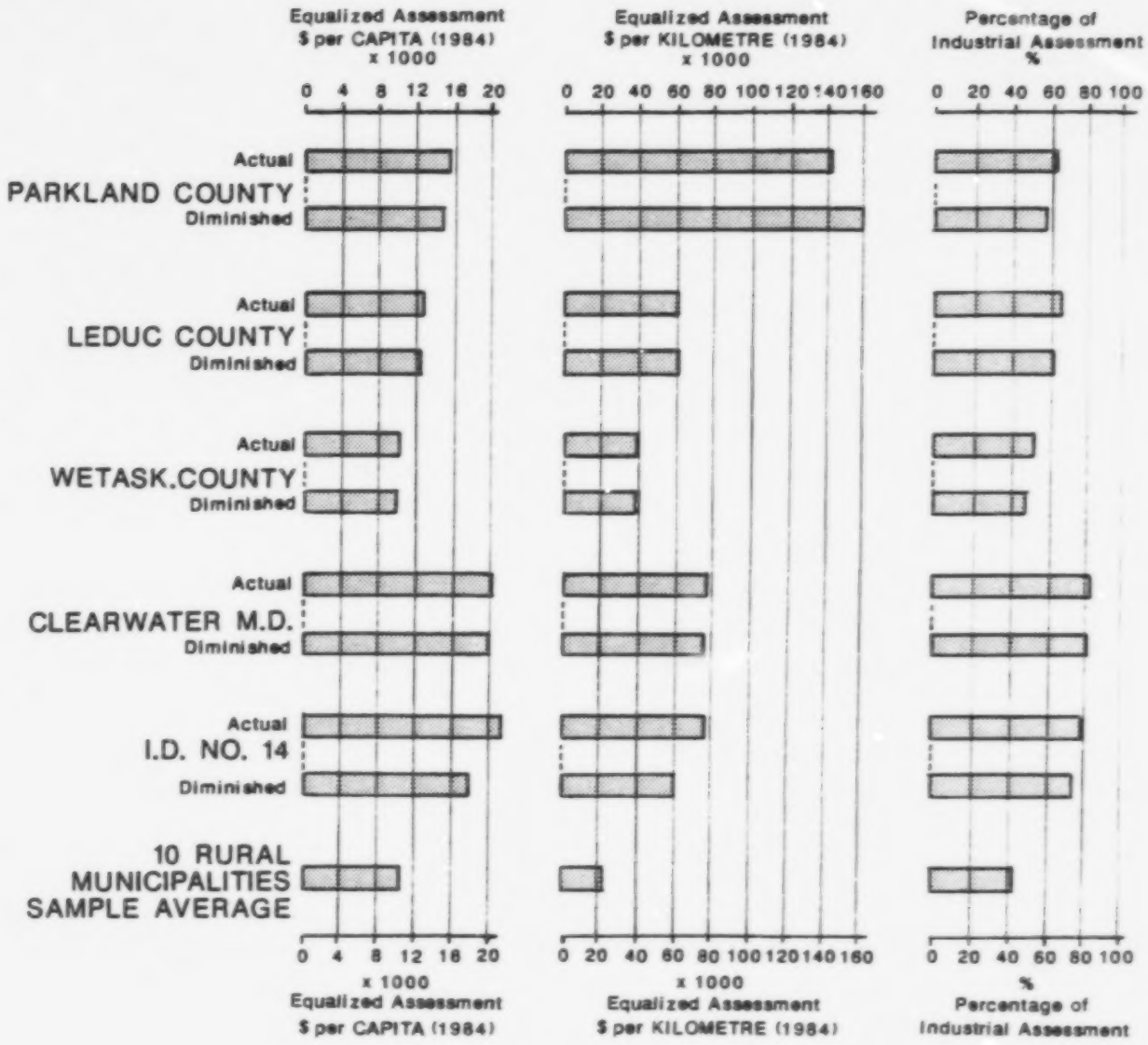


Note : See Map 3-1 for a delineation of impact areas.

SOURCE : Based on re-estimates of information presented in the main feasibility study.

FIGURE 5-2 : IMPACTED JURISDICTIONS :

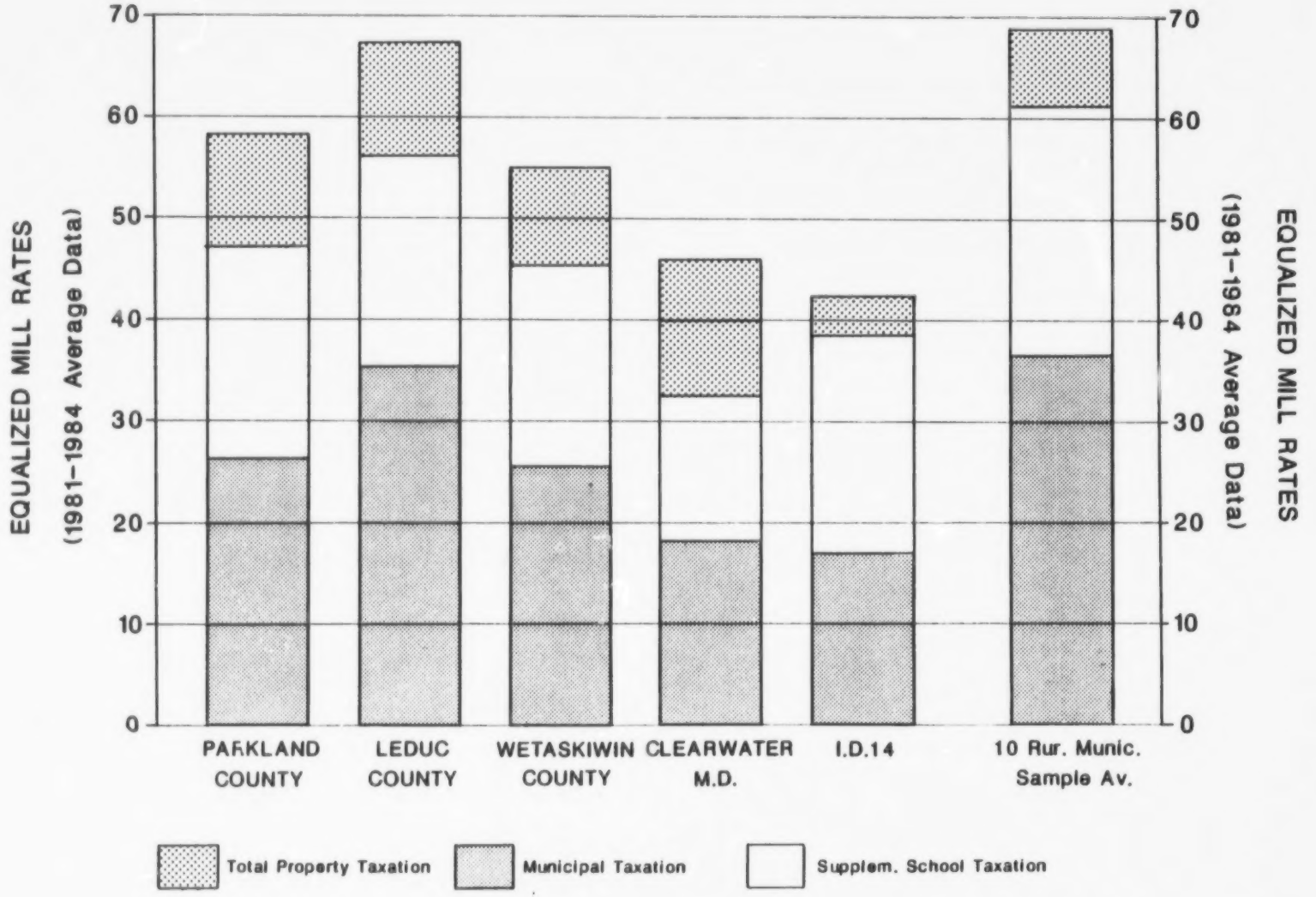
PROJECTED CHANGES IN TAX BASE INDICATORS
(Fiscal Capacity per capita and per kilometre; and Assessment Mix)



SOURCE : Based on re-estimates of information presented in the main feasibility study.

FIGURE 5-3 : EQUALIZED TAX MILL RATES (1981-1984 AVERAGE DATA)

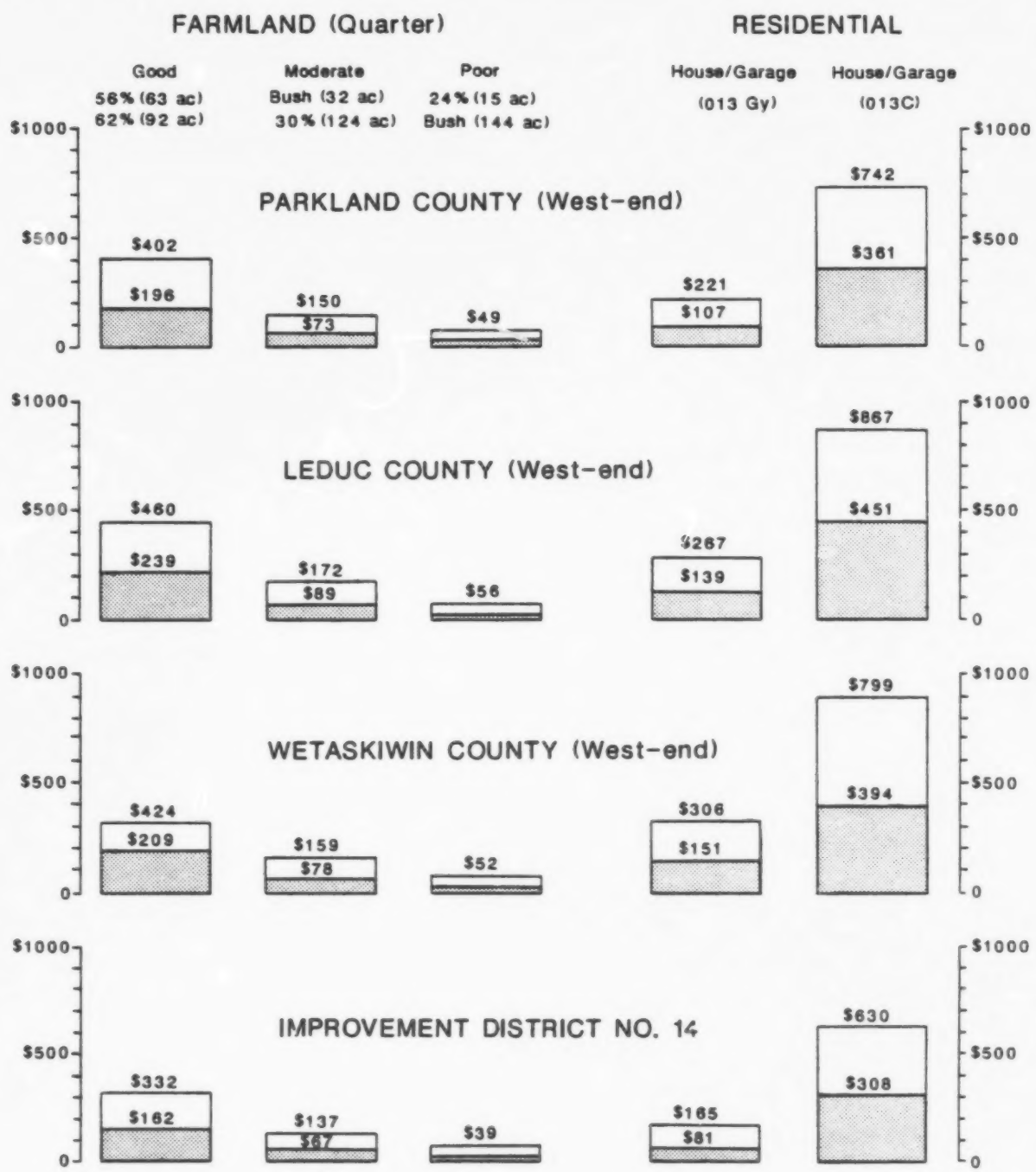
AFFECTED EXISTING MUNICIPALITIES



SOURCE : Main Feasability Study, Table 4-13, p4-50.

FIGURE 5-4 : COMPARATIVE MUNICIPAL AND TOTAL TAXES (1985) :

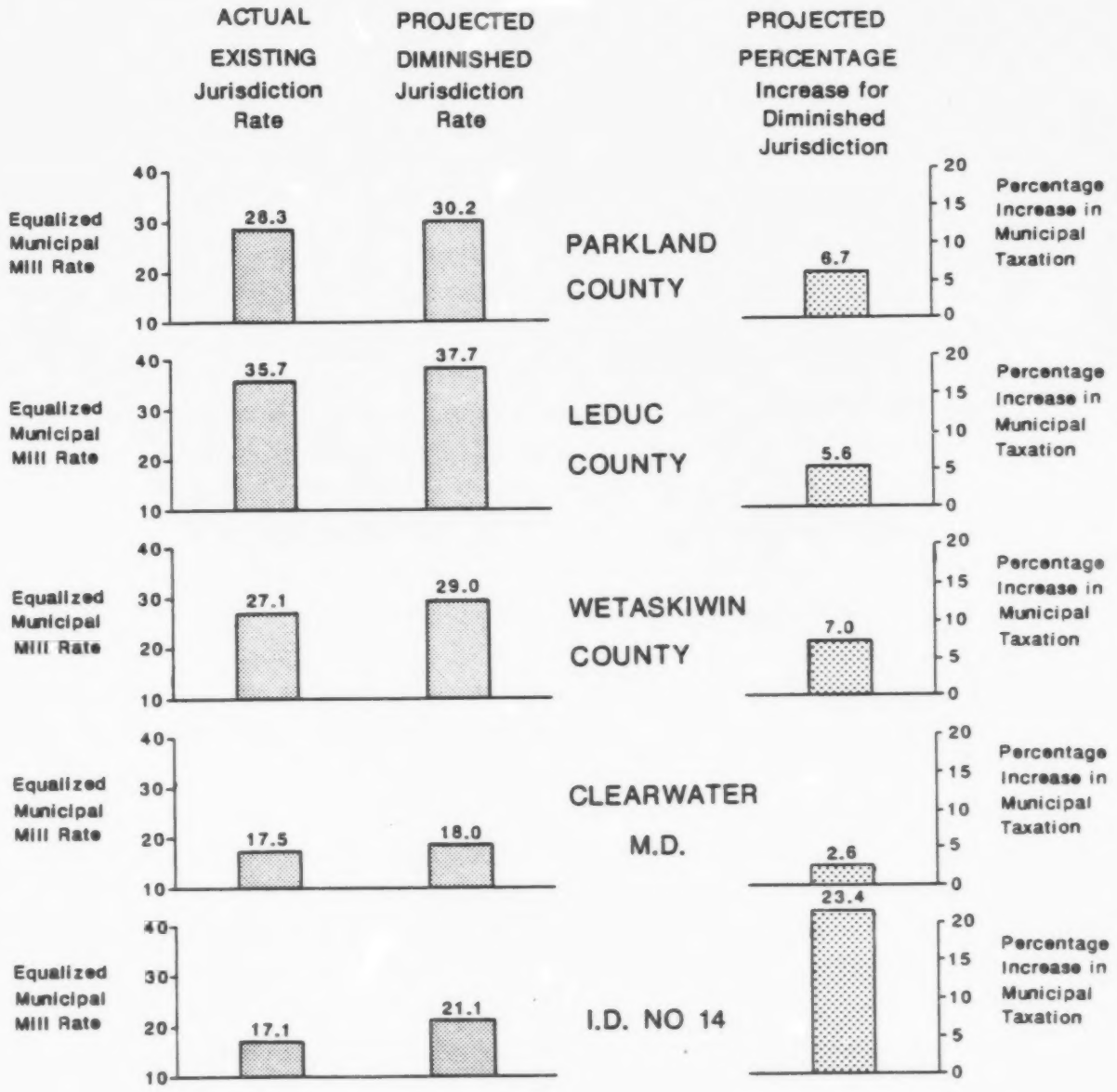
REPRESENTATIVE PROPERTIES : AFFECTED EXISTING MUNICIPALITIES



SOURCE : Main Feasability Study, Table 4-17, p4-54.

FIGURE 5-5 : IMPACTED JURISDICTIONS :

PROJECTED SHIFTS IN MUNICIPAL TAXATION LEVELS (EQUALIZED RATES)



SOURCE : Based on re-estimates of data presented in the Main Feasibility Study, Table 4-16, p4-53.

well-satisfied with their circumstances in comparison with any other alternatives, such as joining another, more rural, rural municipality.

The greatest dilemma would be generated for current Division 7 residents (Moon Lake - Magnolia - Gainford - Seba Beach). They face the possible prospect of one of about three options: the status quo (Stony Plain) a partially incorporated I.D. 14 (Edson or Evansburg - Entwistle); or the proposed M.D. (Drayton Valley).

The existing county council, while presently somewhat split on the issue, obviously includes a majority who would tend to favour the status quo. There is however a general awareness that the west-end will probably continue to be something of a large thorn in the side of the existing county. It is also appreciated that it will be increasingly difficult to deny the demands of westerners for more local democracy, as the east-end continues to grow both in significance and in its urban orientations. The council did in fact adopt a neutral position in the lead-up to the plebiscite, in contrast to the active efforts of Leduc County to defend the status quo. Currently there are indications of a resignation to let the west go and fend for itself, since the plebiscite indicated strong approval for inclusion in the proposed M.D.

From a municipal operations perspective the loss of the west end would probably make for a more streamlined and rational Parkland County. This would occur largely as a result of relief from the general 'doubling-up' of costs associated with the maintenance of the county's large sub-office operation (including public works shop and garage) in Drayton Valley. The diminished county would still have a considerable population base and this, in combination with the smaller area and the more compact shape, should assist the county in increasing operating efficiencies. These could help to avoid any increases in mill rate associated with the loss of a disproportionately large amount of assessment to the proposed M.D.

The county would be relieved of the responsibility for future farmland-access roads in the still-developing west end. It would also be spared the major expenses currently associated with maintaining county

roads used heavily by oil-patch traffic (and, in the future, by trucks servicing forest-industry developments). However, apart from these special demands, the west-end road network has not been nearly so expensive to maintain as that in the more densely developed east. With formation of the proposed M.D. there will be less western tax base in Parkland to help subsidize the present relatively high eastern road standards. Road budgets will be squeezed, perhaps painfully, unless greater efficiencies can be realized (Comparative statistics indicate some scope for attaining such efficiencies).

Parkland County is presently unusual, in comparison with most rural municipalities, in its provision of policing and planning services on a full departmental basis. Both services make most sense in relation to the more densely populated eastern areas, and it is possible that they will enjoy a greater measure of public acceptance in a diminished county setting. It is also probable that they will be able to achieve greater cost-efficiencies, on the basis that the west end is presently more expensive to service, but contributes less through (non-tax) revenues to the recovery of these costs.

From a taxpayer's perspective a diminished Parkland would raise the prospect of a slight increase in municipal taxes, which may or may not be offset by increased operating cost-efficiencies. Even with an increase, Parkland taxpayers would still be comparatively well-serviced at below average tax levels. The prospect of an increase signifies that their relatively low tax levels have in the past been somewhat subsidized by the western tax base. In particular, relatively high road standards in the east (high commuter traffic volumes), have been had at the expense of comparatively low expenditure effort in relation to west-end roads (where tonne-miles are high even if traffic volumes are low).

The question surrounding the inclusion or exclusion of the Tomahawk part of the 'Core Area' could be significant for the diminished county. If it remains in Parkland the opportunity for increased operating cost efficiencies will be diminished since the county's frame of reference would remain comparatively far-flung. The Tomahawk area is already tied

closely into Drayton Valley on numerous grounds, eg. senior high school attendance area; hospital district; district agriculturist; and toll-free telephone calling.

There is also the possibility that other areas of western Parkland will be interested in joining the proposed M.D., eg. Moon Lake - Gainford - Magnolia (but not Wabamun Lake or its shoreline communities). These areas will be placed in even more of a minority position, in the diminished county set-up, if only the immediate Drayton Valley area was removed from Parkland. The County School Board has also indicated that, if the school system was to be diminished in the west, in the same manner as is now being proposed municipally, then some consideration should be given to inclusion of the Entwistle, and possibly also the Seba Beach school attendance areas, in any new school system.

It might be noted that the projected tax rate changes in Parkland's case are much less than was determined in the course of a similar previous study (1977). This is mainly because of the current exclusion of coal-mining and power plant assessment around the south-east shore of Lake Wabamun. The County has also seen healthy assessment growth in the intervening period, offsetting some losses related to the formation of the Village of Wabamun, and the recent Edmonton annexation. There are reasonably good prospects for further assessment growth in the central and eastern parts of Parkland. The future integrity and viability of Parkland County appears to be assured, even if the west end was lost.

5.3 Leduc County:

The Leduc County council as a whole is very opposed to any change in the status quo, and has no desire whatsoever to lose any of its west end to another unit, regardless of the plebiscite results. The council is strongly of the opinion that it has met the concerns raised by west-end residents during the last campaign ten years ago. In marked contrast to their Parkland counterparts there has been no indication of any possible resignation to concede territory in the interests of being rid of a cantankerous western minority.

Like Parkland however, Leduc County is becoming more polarized into a rural west, outside the influence of metropolitan Edmonton, and a semi-urban east, strongly under the metropolitan influence. The council has effectively recognized this fact in their preliminary response to provincial proposals for a realignment of local electoral divisions. Along the lines followed by Parkland, the council has suggested four 'urban' divisions in the east (in the area under the jurisdiction of the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission), and three rural divisions in the west (in the area under the jurisdiction of the Battle River Regional Planning Commission). It may be projected that the balance of power will shift clearly in favour of the semi-urban east, which may or may not be appreciated by western area residents.

If diminished on account of formation of the proposed M.D., Leduc County might be in a position to maintain more of a balance between urban and rural interests (eg. three divisions each, or three urban/four rural). If it must be diminished, the council is also concerned that the boundary should not split either the Breton or Lindale school attendance areas. If the M.D. boundary must split these areas the County School Board is particularly anxious that the Lindale and Breton school locations remain within the municipal jurisdiction of the County.

From a municipal operations perspective Leduc County has less opportunity than Parkland to avoid the extra costs associated with a special servicing effort to the west: the county does not maintain any western sub-office. If it does lose jurisdiction to the proposed M.D., the county does stand to benefit from its relief of responsibility for maintaining and constructing western roads. These seem to involve particular problems related to difficult terrain (deep ravines, complicated creek crossings, extensive cut-and-fill situations) and an incomplete road network. The county appears to have been spending relatively large amounts on roadwork in recent years, but it is difficult to tell how much of this is accounted for by the different circumstances in the west.

From a municipal taxpayer's perspective the remaining Leduc County taxpayers might actually be slightly better off if only the area west of Buck Lake Creek was incorporated into the proposed M.D. However, with the Moose Hill area also included those remaining in Leduc County face the prospect of a small increase in the municipal tax rate. There are indications that while the west end currently accounts for slightly over 10 percent of the County's net function costs for the provision of municipal services, it generates almost 20 percent of the total tax revenues raised.

From an area definition perspective the Moose Hill District has been included in the proposed 'Core Area,' using Modeste Creek as the eastern boundary. This results in a splitting of the Breton school attendance area, in the same way as the Lindale school attendance area may be split (if the Berrymoor area is incorporated into the proposed M.D., and the Lindale-Carnwood area is excluded). Such splits would become significant in the context of the M.D. later pursuing county status or encouraging the formation of a contiguous new school system. Further studies will be required to settle such issues should they arise.

A major factor to be considered in the Leduc County case is the power plant development at Genesee, scheduled to be in operation next decade. This should exert a strong moderating or cushioning effect on tax levels in the county. The importance of this factor is difficult to gauge precisely because of other possible developments which could limit the windfall currently anticipated. For instance, the City of Leduc has applied to annex the Nisku industrial area and the International Airport.

Whatever the exact outcome it is likely that Leduc County will continue to have a relatively healthy assessment base, with or without its west end. Residents of a diminished county need not therefore be unduly concerned about increased taxation as a consequence of diminution on the west. It is more difficult to estimate whether west-end residents would be better off under a new local government. Changes in taxation levels would probably not constitute a decisive factor since the proposed M.D. would also have a relatively healthy assessment base. The servicing available

would almost certainly be at least as good as that now available, and the county seat would be quicker and cheaper to access by road or telephone. However, if the City of Leduc is successful in its annexation bid the County of Leduc assessment base will be heavily impacted. It may be necessary for Leduc County to look at other options to rebuild its assessment base.

5.4 Improvement District No. 14:

The I.D. Advisory Council is actively planning for the incorporation of the I.D. as a Municipal District, if it can secure the provincial government's agreement. The advisory council's hope is to achieve incorporation within its existing boundaries, on the Clearwater model. The advisory council is strongly opposed to any approach which involves a presumption that any portion of the I.D. would be automatically included in the proposed M.D. If the new M.D. proposal is viable without encroaching on the existing I.D. the advisory council would naturally prefer to see such an option pursued, even if more appropriate boundaries would naturally encompass parts of the I.D. and municipalities other than Parkland County.

From a municipal operations perspective the I.D. would experience no significant changes in responsibilities. From a taxpayer's perspective the diminished I.D. would be liable to encounter increased municipal tax rates. These would be limited in the case of the 'core area' M.D. and more significant if the 'option area' was also included, but the tax level would remain well below average in both situations.

The I.D. naturally prefers not to lose any jurisdiction to the proposed M.D. Lesser diminution scenarios, such as those observed in the previous chapter, would be more tolerable than loss of the whole 'option area' since they would reduce the projected percentage level of tax increases. Much will depend on whether weight is placed on these percentage increases, or on the well below average level of municipal taxation in effect in I.D. 14.

Until very recently, in contrast to recent trends affecting other rural municipalities, I.D. 14's assessment base has been growing at an impressive rate, further bolstering already high fiscal capacities. Prospects for new assessment growth appear to be comparatively good.

5.5 Wetaskiwin County:

The county council's general position is one of surprise and incredulity that the extreme west-end of the county has been included in the present study. They have been acting on the strong presumption that there will be no diminution, and this was underlined by the offensive they took in applying to annex the Rose Creek area of the M.D. of Clearwater (the annexation bid was unsuccessful).

The plebiscite results indicated no clear decision either way, leaving open the possibility of inclusion in the proposed M.D. Opinions among west-end residents are currently divided between an attraction to either: the status quo; the M.D. of Clearwater or the proposed Drayton Valley area M.D. There is also the general position that an outstanding school re-arrangements issue needs to be settled before residents can move on to consider their municipal future.

From a municipal operations perspective there is the possibility that greater operating efficiencies can be achieved without the extreme west-end, but the area in question is rather small - in comparison with the Leduc and Parkland situations - and this could limit opportunities for improved cost-efficiencies. From a taxpayer's perspective loss of the extreme west-end would result in a small increase in municipal tax rates, especially if significant cost-efficiencies could not be realized.

Wetaskiwin County is the poorest of the three counties involved in this issue. It also has the poorest prospects in terms of future assessment growth. This limits, and will continue to limit, the county's ability to provide more than a basic range and level of servicing. It will always have difficulty comparing its servicing situation favourably with that available in better-off local governments. As such it will inevitably be

liable to lose the allegiance of some residents envious of the servicing attainable in nearby 'richer' jurisdictions.

Those now resident in the extreme west end are particularly liable to be influenced by the greater proximity of municipal districts seated in Rocky Mountain House or Drayton Valley: both much closer than the present county seat in Wetaskiwin. Just as the M.D. of Clearwater was lobbied by some area residents to consider a counter-annexation bid for the three westerly ranges of Wetaskiwin County, it is even more likely that there would be interest in being annexed into the proposed M.D. since Drayton Valley is closer than Rocky Mountain House. The 'Core Area' has therefore included certain parts of Wetaskiwin County. It is expected, under such a scenario, that the Rose Creek area of the M.D. of Clearwater would also be included in the proposed M.D.

5.6 M.D. of Clearwater:

Even though the Rose Creek area of the M.D. (west of Alder Flat), represents only a tiny fraction of its total area, the M.D. council has mounted an unusually strong defence of this part of its jurisdiction. It is on record, in the context of opposing Wetaskiwin County's recent annexation bid, as being 'not prepared to lose control' over the area. And, with an eye to the proposed Drayton Valley area M.D., Clearwater's submission to the Local Authorities Board solicited not only Board rejection of the Wetaskiwin application, but also positive affirmation of the M.D.'s jurisdiction, 'to put to rest any present or future notion that this municipality is prepared to release its administration or its taxation role in regard to this portion of its jurisdictional area'.

The M.D.'s case in opposing the annexation bid was based partly on its position that the county was simply attempting a tax grab: it is not so possible to make such a case when the change would be associated with formation of a new municipality. Similarly, the M.D. developed the superiority of Rocky Mountain House as a base for administering this particular part of the M.D. compared to the more distant Wetaskiwin: it naturally did not engage the issue of whether Drayton Valley might be an

even better centre for administration of the area, even though this centre would be closer than either Wetaskiwin or Rocky Mountain House. The M.D. was also very concerned that a successful bid by the county could set a precedent whereby other counties on its eastern border might be tempted to make similar but more substantial forays into the agricultural core of the M.D.: incorporation of the Rose Creek area into the proposed M.D. would be less precedent-setting than a successful Wetaskiwin County annexation bid.

The area in question used to be part of former I.D. 11, a small, virtually uninhabited, area dominated by Crown land within the Green Area. This older separate status of the former I.D., from former I.D. 10, reflects the fact that the area had little real connection with the Rocky Mountain House area prior to the administrative consolidation of both I.D.'s in 1979. Nevertheless, the new M.D. of Clearwater was not averse to considering a counter-annexation bid to include the three westerly ranges of Wetaskiwin County. However, the Reeve of the M.D. has indicated that any such bid would probably have to have the support of 80 percent of the area's residents before it could proceed. (An October 1985 poll indicated only 50 percent support, on the basis of limited information about all the options).

Taxpayers in the diminished M.D. would face the prospect of very slight increases in tax rates if the Rose Creek areas, including the adjacent occupied area, was lost. The taxpayers already enjoy unusually low tax rates and it is difficult to see such increases causing any significant hardship.

5.7 Town of Drayton Valley:

The townspeople clearly stand to benefit from more localized local government for the town's main trading area. The difficulties which have faced the town in the past have been graphically illustrated by the recent 'two-price system' controversy in relation to operation of the town's library and swimming pool.

The town's problem has been in receiving adequate compensation for use of these facilities by rural residents whose councils have been reluctant to re-imburse the town for a proportionate share of the operating deficits. This has engendered much ill-feeling between the town and surrounding rural residents, (so much so that the town has recently decided to forego pressing the issue in the interests of restoring some harmony). The issue demonstrates how the townspeople, and the residents in the various rural jurisdictions, have both been victimized by the existing fragmentation of local government arrangements for their wider community.

With the proposed M.D. the town may find it easier to conclude inter-municipal agreements than is presently the case. There would exist the inevitable potential for inter-municipal urban/rural friction. As indicated earlier urban fringe annexation is likely to be a flash-point.

CHAPTER 6: FUTURE ACTION

6.1 Introduction:

A separate local government for the general Drayton Valley area is highly feasible at the present time. On the basis of reaction to the March 1986 study there is a general consensus that the change should take the form of a Municipal District, for the rural area only, with the Town of Drayton Valley continuing to exist as a separate urban municipality within the boundaries of the proposed M.D. There has been much less consensus concerning the particular areas to be incorporated into the M.D. Attainment of a greater consensus on this question is a pre-requisite for future implementation actions.

Ideally in this case, the M.D. jurisdiction should encompass at least those areas where Drayton Valley has a dominant or significant influence, in comparison with competing centres of similar rank in the service-centre hierarchy, regardless of present municipal boundaries. This ideal needs to be conditioned by the assumption that the taxpayers in these areas find Drayton Valley, or its immediate environs, to be a more convenient and acceptable municipal government seat than the present arrangements. It is essential that there be a general granting of consent to be governed from Drayton Valley, under a generally acceptable form of government with fair and reasonable representation for all areas.

6.2 Public Information/Consultation Programming:

The resolution of these issues, in the first instance, was seen to require a more organized program of public information dissemination and public consultation than has been possible to date. This report is intended to prime such a program. A public notice has been circulated identifying the proposed areas, and indicating the Minister's position and plans. Public 'open-house' information meetings, conducted by Alberta Municipal Affairs, are to be held to furnish information, field questions and to gauge the popular will, especially in those areas where the plebiscite resulted in no clear indication either way.

This program will be complemented by a series of meetings with affected local authorities, most notably the existing municipal jurisdictions. This report is to provide a basis for discussion at these meetings, and the feedback received will be shared in the 'open-house' information meetings as appropriate. The meetings with the Councils of affected local authorities will be held in Stony Plain (Parkland); Leduc; Wetaskiwin; Edson (I.D. 14); Rocky Mountain House (M.D. of Clearwater); Drayton Valley and Breton. 'Open-house' information meetings will be held throughout the area.

The Minister has requested department staff conducting the 'open-houses' and other meetings to prepare a report dealing with all the feedback received as a result of the program activity. The Minister has indicated a particular interest in seeing recommendations on the following matters:

- Area definition: unresolved matters.
- Enabling legislation: whether special legislation, or amendments to existing legislation, may be required to facilitate incorporation of the proposed M.D.
- Timing and mechanics of incorporation: when the proposed M.D. could be incorporated, and ancillary requirements to achieve operational status by the date of incorporation.
- Impacted jurisdictions: outstanding concerns.
- School system representation: what re-arrangements are proposed (by Alberta Education), and related issues.
- Any other relevant matters arising from the program activity.

6.3 Boundary Establishment:

It should be noted that, when it reaches the stage of describing the actual area to be observed, the courses of creeks may not be practical as a reference base. This would apply, for example, to the possible use of Buck Lake Creek and Modeste Creek as the eastern boundary with Leduc County. These creeks dissect a large number of quarter sections of land. A more practical detailed boundary would observe the most appropriate section lines.

6.4 Enabling Legislation:

Depending on the outcome of the report on the public information/consultation programming, it may be necessary to embark on a program to develop enabling legislation. In recent years unusual re-structuring of municipal government arrangements have required that special legislation be enacted, eg. the Crowsnest Pass Municipal Unification Act; the M.D. of Clearwater Incorporation Act. This may also be the case for the Drayton Valley Area M.D.

6.5 Incorporation Order Preliminaries:

The order for incorporation could be made once the area can be legally defined. The date of incorporation will have to be set in order to leave enough time to undertake numerous administrative tasks needed to prepare for incorporation. The date is likely to be the beginning of 1989. The enabling legislation may have to provide for an interim 'shadow' council, in place prior to formal incorporation, to guide the administrative adjustments.

The election of the interim council will necessitate the establishment of local electoral divisions, which in turn will require the conduct of a comprehensive population census.

Other tasks to be handled early in the process, leading up to incorporation day, include:

- The determination of fixed assets, and the division of assets and liabilities between the new M.D. and the former municipal jurisdiction.
- The acquisition of a location for the M.D. office and public works facilities.
- The hiring of an administrator, well in advance of the incorporation date, to assist the interim council in coping with the lead-up to incorporation. (The hiring of an administrator would have to be preceded by the establishment of an initiator/facilitator.)

The tasks facing the interim council and administrator include:

- Compilation of the assessment roll.
- Establishment of a financial accounting system and development of a preliminary budget.
- Staffing provisions for all functions, including organization chart and job descriptions.
- Insurance arrangements.
- Numerous draft bylaws.
- Development of a council policy manual.
- Provisions for municipal boards or agencies, eg. Recreation Board; Agricultural Service Board.
- Consideration of policing issue (own force or alternatives).
- Intermunicipal agreements.

Consideration will also have to be given to the representation or participation of the M.D. on various regional or inter-municipal bodies, eg. regional planning commission, hospital district, seniors foundation. The major concern here will be with respect to M.D. representation on the School Boards of the systems it is involved in supporting.

6.6 Post-Incorporation:

Once the M.D. is incorporated, and has been operational for some time, it is conceivable that it will take the initiative to move towards county status, or to encourage the formation of a continguous new school district. Such proposals for further change in local government arrangements for the area will require considerable study by the provincial government before any action is taken. This will be especially the case if the boundaries of the new M.D. split school attendance areas, as is presently proposed. There could be knock-on effects from any school-system re-arrangements that might be implemented - in the form of either an expansion or shrinking of the initial municipal jurisdiction.

Regardless of the school system issue the new M.D., once incorporated, could be subjected to simple annexation, or de-annexation, proposals.

Some areas may wish to join, while others may wish to leave. There is little precedent for annexation activity between rural municipalities. The M.D. may also be involved in a chronic dispute with the Town of Drayton Valley around the urban/rural fringe annexation issue. The M.D. will be a comparatively low-tax rural jurisdiction, surrounding a comparatively high-tax town. This issue could be tackled perhaps through a joint general municipal plan focussing on the urban/rural fringe, if each party is willing.